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MAX PAYNE
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PC CD

WIN THE TOP 10 PC GAMES SEE THE PC ZONE CHARTS PAGE 20

66 OPERATION FLASHPOINT: COLD WAR CRISIS Yet another exclusive review, and a title that we think could be in the running for Game Of The Year. Find out why.

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PREVIEWS

We take a look at the games we're getting unnaturally excited about

REVIEWS

The most definitive reviews section around. All the latest and greatest PC games (and, of course, some of the worst) come under the cynical *PC ZONE* microscope

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News, previews and reviews on the latest happenings in online gaming

ON THE CDS

FULL DETAILS PAGE 138

EXCLUSIVE DEMOS

EDGE OF CHAOS: INDEPENDENCE WAR 2

ARCANUM

LEGENDS OF MIGHT & MAGIC

PLUS

SETTLERS IV
ASSIMILATION
CONFLICT ZONE
OFFROAD
STRONGHOLD CASTLE ATTACKS
CREATURES DOCKING STATION
DIGIMASK LAUNCH PAD
VARIOUS MODS, INCLUDING
QUAKE III FORTRESS 1H UPDATE

> "Carnby starts the game in the middle of a storm, where the scary atmosphere is supposed to be created by the sound of thunder and some risible owls hooting"

50 ALONE IN THE DARK: THE NEW NIGHTMARE: Read our massive world exclusive review of Infogrames' spooky third-person survival horror. Is it hauntingly good, terrifyingly bad or scarily indifferent? Find out, if you dare…

WIN! THE COMPO NO ONE FINDS Correctly answer this month's cover question and you could win some PC goodies. Send your entry on a postcard addressed to: **The Compo No One Finds (104),** *PC ZONE*, **30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF**. The first entry with the correct answer plucked out of the hat wins a mystery prize. The editor's decision is final. Closing date: Wednesday June 27 2001. The winner of our May (Issue 102) cover compo was Aaron Girling of Arnold, who wins something from the ZONE prize cupboard for sending in the correct answer to our last little teaser

should I just retreat?

the noble Atreides?

n a friend?

surprise air attack?

o I need to pick up a Kobra cannon?

eed to get hold of the twisted cloning technology of the Tleilax to win?

Which of the 33 maps will I choose?

Will the sand worms attack my troops here?

Do I play against human opponents or against the computer?

Do I side with the brave Sardaukar or the technocratic Ix?

Will I need a Minotaurus war machine?

Should I carry my ground troops to safety now so they can fight in my next battle?

Does an alliance with the Fremen or the Guild give me a better chance of victory?

Do I fight for the insidious Ordos?

Do I need more spice factories to give me more

Can I

AS COMMANDER YOU
ARE EXPECTED TO
MAKE ALL THE CHOICES.
NOW.

Emperor Battle for Dune is the first strategy game where you make all the choices and really plan your campaign before you play. It will challenge your strategic skills like no game has done before. It's in 3D. And it's from Westwood. So your first choice is obvious. Emperor.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

I'm writing this the day before I fly out to E3 to drool over the latest games, drink beer by the sea, and try to get a VIP pass into the Viper Room. And I can't wait. With games such as *Wolfenstein*, *Duke Nukem Forever*, *Age Of Mythology*, *Freelancer*, *C&C Renegade*, *Neverwinter Knights* and *Jedi Knight 2* (or whatever it's going to be called) on show, it's set to be the biggest and best yet. If I can actually manage to find time in between games of pool to file my copy back, you should be able to read all about the RPGs I saw while I was over there this month, and next month we're going to look at first-person shooters. It might not be the same as experiencing it first-hand, with free flights and free food and drink, but it's the next best thing.

And talking of the present, we've managed to secure exclusive reviews this month of *Alone In The Dark: The New Nightmare* and *Operation Flashpoint*. We've been getting excited about *Op Flash* for months now and thankfully the finished product hasn't disappointed, although our recommendation does come with a few caveats. Turn to page 66 to see exactly what we thought, and why.

Before I go I should explain why we haven't run a demo of *Undying*, despite the fact that it's freely available on the Internet. Over the past couple of months you might have noticed a tiny ELSPA certificate on the cover of your CDs. We've been told that if we don't use these voluntary ratings we run the risk of being sued for any obscene material that might appear. Like *Undying*. Having raved about the atmosphere and playability we were desperate for you to get the chance to try it out for yourselves, but then the bad news came. "It's an 18-certificate." So if we run with an 18-certificate you'd find us on the top shelf in between *Fiesta* and *Escort*. And unfortunately this is set to continue. Think about all the upcoming first-person shooters. *Duke Nukem* is hardly likely to get away with anything but the red BBFC certificate, and as games become more realistic, more and more of them are going to be similarly affected. It's the same across the board though. You won't find a magazine out there who can flout the law, and you won't find anyone else willing to run an 18-rated issue.

So for the benefit of those of you without a high-speed Internet account I'd just like to reiterate: if you like first-person shooters and you like being scared, you'll like *Undying*. As long as you're over 18.

> **If we don't use these voluntary ratings we run the risk of being sued for any obscene material that might appear**

Dave Woods
Editor

⬆ No violence please, we're British.

Tech Level 1

Trooper-Rachel

Rebel Alliance

30/30

5

0/0

4

240   980   320   210

Galactic Battlegrounds will feature more than 300 buildings and units. Not too shabby.
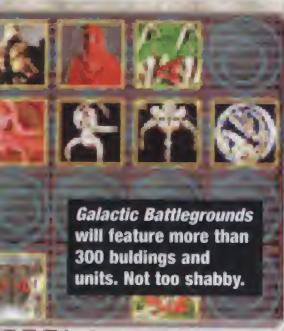
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WHIP OUT YOUR LIGHTSABRES
STAR WARS
GALACTIC BATTLEGROUNDS

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER LucasArts
PUBLISHER Activision
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Winter 2001
WEBSITE www.lucasarts.com

IN SUMMARY

An RTS game based around the *Star Wars* universe that runs on the *Age Of Empires* engine. Spanning the entire *Star Wars* saga, you'll be given a choice of playing as one of several sides (good or evil), which you must lead to victory in order to determine the final outcome of the Galactic Civil War.

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

If anything *Star Wars*-related rings your bell, then I suppose that's one reason as to why you should get excited about *Galactic Battlegrounds*. If you're not a sci-fi geek though, then the collection of 300 units and a choice of six sides to play as are two other features worth salivating over.

Our esteemed writer felt the force once, but got his head stuck. He's not going to do it again

⊗ **STILL FEELING IT NOW** Martin Korda

Tech Level 3

620   170   510   760   16/25

Galactic Empire

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The *Age Of Empires* engine might look a bit nasty, but we know it plays like a dream.

❷ What's this lego man doing here?

❷ A force-full gun turret. Hahahaha.

❷ Sit in it and mow your lawn.

few days ago I sat through *The Phantom Menace* – again. By the time the epic final sequence came to an end, I wasn't quite sure what was worse – the film or the violent attack of the squits that had kept me off work for three days and stripped me of a stone in weight. The clincher was the Gungan army, that stupid race of bungling alien halfwits who take on an army of laser-wielding robots with catapults and slings – good plan boys. Wouldn't it be great (I thought) to lead their race to an ignominious end, a massacre of such epic proportions that we'd never be bothered by their annoying high-pitched voices and incomprehensible phrases that sound like someone catching their fingers in a slamming door? Of course it would, and with LucasArts announcing its latest *Star Wars*-based RTS, *Star Wars Galactic Battlegrounds*, you'll have the opportunity to do just that. Well, kind of anyway.

Using an enhanced version of the *Age Of Empires* engine, *Star Wars Galactic Battlegrounds* will span the entire *Star Wars* saga, which means you'll be guaranteed an opportunity to mash up some annoying aliens at some stage, especially if you decide to play as the Galactic Empire. You'll also be able to take charge of Wookies, the Rebel Alliance, Royal Naboo, the Trade Federation and yes, those bloody annoying Gungans too. In all there'll be 300 different land, air and sea units and structures for you to research and construct. This large diversity of units will allow you to take part in epic battles, based on any number of battlegrounds, be they an asteroid belt or an underwater city, with armies reaching sizes of up to 200 units. Let's just hope that we're not subjected to

another *C&C* type game though, in which you simply mass your forces before charging the enemy. LucasArts has likened the gameplay to *AOE2*, so hopefully all the depth and charm from that game will also be present in *Galactic Battlegrounds*.

There'll be plenty of races and units that will be instantly familiar to any *Star Wars* fan. We've been promised that bounty hunters, storm troopers, X-

66 Best of all, you'll be able to send Jedi Knights into the heat of battle. I don't know about you, but I've always fancied seeing Yoda in a ruck 99

Wings, AT-ATs, snowspeeders, AT-STs, Wookie Kas tanks and droids will all be making an appearance, and best of all, you'll be able to send Jedi Knights into the heat of battle. I don't know about you, but I've always fancied seeing Yoda in a ruck, and it'll be interesting to see how the pointy eared midget fares in a fight. No doubt ankle-biting and lightsabre

kneecapping will come into the equation at some point.

Each side will have a unique collection of upgradeable technology. They'll also have special skills, such as Jedi stamina. As well as the individual campaigns, *Star Wars Galactic Battlegrounds* will ship with a scenario editor that will let you create your own single or multiplayer levels to kick the force out of your mates on. You'll be able to throw in any combination of sides, settings and units into your creations, which will give you a near infinite amount of possibilities when making your ideal map.

It's still early days for this project, but the *Star Wars* licence will undoubtedly guarantee its popularity. As for the game itself, it's too early to make a judgement, but the fact it runs on the *Age Of Empires* engine certainly bodes well, even if it's already showing its age. Let's hope LucasArts makes a better job of this than it did with the dire *Force Commander*. Although, that's hardly going to be difficult, is it? PCZ

Better than *Shogun*? We'll let you know.

FRIENDS, ROMANS, COUNTRYMEN

PRAETORIANS

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW

DEVELOPER Pyro Studios
PUBLISHER Eidos
EXPECTED RELEASE DATE Spring 2002
WEBSITE www.eidos.com.uk

IN SUMMARY

Play as the Romans, Gauls or Egyptians in your quest to conquer all, in this *Shogun*-meets-*Cossacks*-with-a-dash-of-*Caesar 3* RTS – in 3D

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Coming from Pyro Studios, makers of *Commandos*, we can expect a game that is both heavy on the immersive realism and big on fun. Impressive 3D visuals right down to the individual units and a sophisticated engine suggest that *Praetorians* is set to haul *Shogun* over the coals.

Grab your little sister's gym skirt and get out the wild boar and honey dripping

⚫ **GIRL WITH THE BIG WHIP** Rhianna Pratchett

Romans, what did they ever do for us?

The 'if we can't see them they can't see us' military formation goes horribly wrong.

UPDATE

Concerning the second thing that the Romans were famous for, and not in fact being the official 3D version of *Sim Orgy*, *Praetorians* is a 3D RTS set amid the trials and tribulations of the emerging Roman Empire. But in a climate where RTS players have gorged themselves to bursting point on historical strategy fare along the lines of *Shogun*, *Age Of Kings* and *Cossacks*, will *Praetorians* be the wafer thin mint which has us coating the walls?

Praetorians' project leader Javier Arevalo certainly thinks so."We believe that focusing on combat and bringing these kinds of innovations really sets *Praetorians* apart. Special unit abilities and formations such as the Roman Turtle or the Gaul war cries, emphasise the combat-oriented gameplay style, and the player will have the chance to drive fortress sieges using a variety of war machines such as assault towers or battering rams."

The good news for those that would rather concentrate their efforts on troop juggling than crop rotation, is that *Praetorians* contains very little resource management, and instead is much more focused on the military strategy aspect, using a number of actual Roman campaigns as the inspiration behind a number of the missions. "Our goal is to emphasise troop control and strategic decisions

> ## "Special unit abilities and formations such as the Roman Turtle or the Gaul war cries emphasise the combat-oriented gameplay style"
>
> *PRAETORIANS* PROJECT LEADER JAVIER AREVALO

in combat situations," says Arevalo. "In this context, making a complex resource model would conflict with our style of gameplay, because it would shift focus to building bigger armies faster."

As far as camera angles go, Pyro have sensibly decided to opt for a fixed camera angle which ideally will help

the player evaluate the terrain, stay focused and keep track of their attack and defence plans. However, the game uses a full 3D engine in order to reflect the complexity of terrain and unit animations, which together provide some impressive visuals.

Following in the upstanding tradition of three-sided warfare, the big three in *Praetorians* are the disciplined Romans, the raw strength of the Gauls (undoubtedly caused by falling into the magic potion when they were babies) and the Egyptians, who use a combination of religious fanaticism and science to complement their range of military units.

Your military units are arranged and controlled in troop formations, although some specific types of units

are individual by nature, with special purposes like exploration or technology, rather than direct combat. You will be given a specific army to begin with, and you'll need to recruit additional troops all through the mission and also work out a way to prevent the enemy from doing the same. As you progress through the campaigns, new abilities and technologies will become available, and within an individual mission there will be several ways of improving the abilities and performance of troops in combat.

But as with most RTS games, it is the AI of your troops that can make or break the entire gameplay experience. Too many of us have wept over our keyboards as our perfectly honed army were cut to shreds because they decided to take a short cut straight through the middle of the enemy's base. "The AI evaluates and makes use of the most appropriate unit abilities depending on the balance of their forces and the enemy they're facing," claims Arevalo. "It also recognises the importance of villages, terrain and ambush spots. Additionally, we can fine-tune the specific details for each mission's flow of goals and sub-goals, thanks to our scripting engine." **PZ**

ANOTHER VISITOR...

● NEWS EDITOR Anthony Holden

Who the hell is this come-uppity new geezer on the Bulletin pages, I hear you ask (though probably in far less flattering language). Well, with Mark now happily sunning himself in the glare of his 28in TV, I've torn myself from the same freelance dreamland to step up and take the Bulletin by the horns. Giving up my life of indolence was not easy, but having Martin put me in a figure-four leglock kind of sweetened the deal. No... really. And so far it's been nothing but *Counter-Strike*, drinking and wrestling jokes, so I don't know what Mark meant when he said: "run while you've still got the will to live."

But seriously, I'm actually extremely happy to be joining the *ZONE* team, and look forward to bringing you an excellent news section, but nobody wants to read about that. The real news is it's that time of year again, when the games industry shows its true colours for a few debauched days of browsing, boozing and back-scratching (perhaps it should be called 'B3'...). That's what we hear in the sporadic reports from Dave and Richie anyway, who are still missing after a particularly rowdy night at the Viper Rooms. But they did keep their promise of getting the games out of the way before hitting the Strip, and we've managed to squeeze in a few last minute E3 titbits. Of course, at this time of year there's always a news overload, and we've done our best to sift the truly exciting stuff from the over-hyped fluff.

Particularly raising hackles at the moment is the frighteningly nice-looking *Aliens Vs Predator 2* and downright unbelievable *Republic: The Revolution*. The first is a huge sequel to a massive triple-A hit, the latter a slice of innovation from a talented independent codeshop. E3 saw both types of game represented well, and a spectacular 12 months of gaming seems assured.

In other news, there's going to be a few changes around here. Some old regulars will see a return, and a few new ones will make their debuts. So keep your eyes peeled.

Nasty, mean old Yuri. Bad.

YURI SEES RED

● Westwood • ETA Autumn 2001 • www.westwood.com

The psychic menace returns in a *Red Alert 2* add-on

An expansion disc for *Red Alert 2* – what are the chances of that happening, eh? Rather high, as you would imagine, since *Yuri's Revenge* was announced back in April and shown at the recent E3 in Los Angeles.

Missing, presumed soon-to-return at the end of *RA2*'s Allied campaign, Yuri was, of course, the power behind the Soviet throne in the original game, and having cut his ties with his puppet masters, has since gone about building a new army with which to take over the US.

Offering two new campaigns composed of seven missions each, Allied and Russian generals must halt the rogue menace by going back in time. Westwood is pulling out all the stops, lavishing money on high-quality FMV sequences to drive the story, with the entire cast making a return.

As for the missions, they're set across familiar cities and even the moon, but you won't be able to play as Yuri except through the ten co-operative multiplayer maps planned for the add-on. There will be 30 new units though, most of which are new buildings. Yuri's army gets the best deal, with Virus Snipers and a Slave Miner that can collect and process ore without the need to return to a refinery.

RECON MEN

● Red Storm • ETA Winter 2001 • www.redstorm.com

The *Rainbow Six* return

Let's be honest, outside its specialist subject of team-focused real-world action, developer Red Storm has failed to make much of an impact. *Freedom: First Resistance* (*PCZ* #102), its most recent game, was rather poor, so it's with some relief that we can confirm Red Storm is once more heading in the right direction with *Ghost Recon*, which isn't a sequel, but looks set to be along similar lines as *Rainbow Six* and *Rogue Spear*.

As you might expect, *Ghost Recon* puts you in command of 'The Ghosts', an elite team of US specialists usually sent in to clean up other people's mess, whether it's rescuing prisoners or fighting small-scale conflicts with rebel factions. Either side will

The new graphics engine is rather sweet.

be playable, with plenty of hardware for both – from attack helicopters to tanks.

Apart from the emphasis on larger scale combat, *Ghost Recon* will also introduce experimental weaponry, including ground-to-air rockets and various high-tech gadgets to aid in the fight for democracy.

Monolith wants to move away from the claustrophobic feel of the original.

The LithTech 2.5 engine should flesh out the characters.

Look, a predator. Run!

Expect corridor action, but look forward to big wide-open battles as well.

THE BITCH IS ALMOST BACK

Vivendi • ETA winter 2001 • www.lith.com

There's something out there waiting for us and it ain't no man... it's *Aliens Vs Predator*

James Cameron managed to take a classic and improve upon it, and now that we've managed to get our sticky mitts on the first batch of screens for the sequel to *Aliens Vs Predator*, we're hoping that Monolith can repeat the trick of the worst speech writer in the world.

The raw materials are in place. The game is going to utilise an advanced version of the LithTech 2.0 engine, which was used to great effect in *No One Lives Forever*, and feature the face-hugger, chest-buster and drone aliens in addition to the predator and various different-flavoured marines. Each of these is going to sport seven single-player levels, along with free-for-all and team-based deathmatches. Richie still has nightmares about the original, and we have to admit to being slightly worried that the sequel is promising to take the levels away from the dark claustrophobic tunnel-based maps, offering spacious hangars and even (sharp intake of breath) brightly lit corridors. However, if Monolith can get the balance right this could actually add to the fear you get when you're suddenly plunged back into darkness. The level we saw at E3 certainly promises a lot, with the LithTech back-drop providing a suitably futuristic and industrial feel, with plenty of steam-injected vents and superb water effects.

When we first heard news of *AvP2* way back in the middle of last year, we also reported that Fox was working on a name slightly more imaginative than *Aliens Vs Predator 2*, but at the time of going to print we can confirm that the employees obviously aren't getting paid enough, and the name *AvP2* still stands. Tune in next month for an in-depth look at it in our E3 shooters special, but for now feast your eyes on the screenshots and hope that the Vivendi spokesman who stated: "We're looking at a release late this year", was telling the truth. If not we might just have to put him in a camel clutch when we see him at E3 next year.

Teach the preacher a thing or two about manners.

The advanced AI doesn't extend to dress sense.

The rivals put some heavies out to protect the padre...

...but they didn't count on retribution from the heavens.
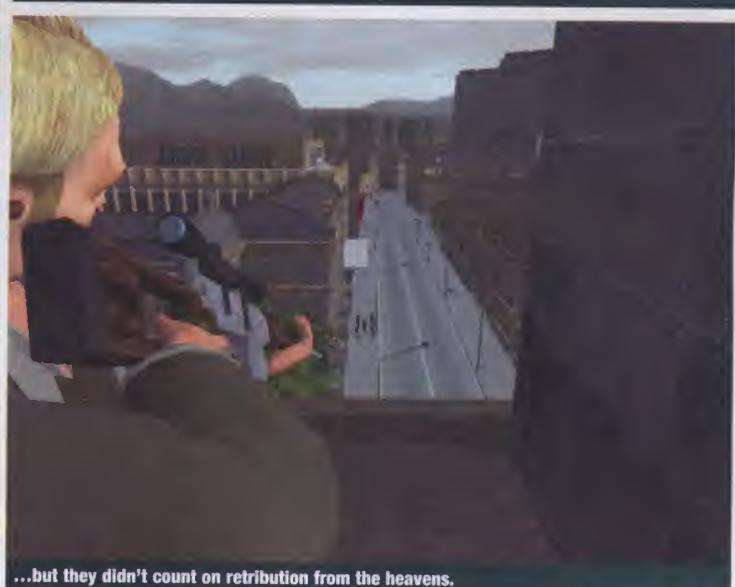
REPUBLIC

⭐ Elixir Studios • ETA Spring 2002 • www.elixir-studios.co.uk

The revolution draws nearer

O ne of the most preposterously ambitious games ever conceived is finally starting to take shape, with the latest demos opening a tantalising window into the future of strategy gaming. *Republic: The Revolution* may still be a year away, but it's already promising to be a gaming milestone and stunning paradigm shift in games technology.

The games community has so far declined to get overly excited about *Republic*, mainly because the claims made by the developers are so far beyond cutting edge that they're frankly difficult to believe. An infinite polygon engine? Huge cities and towns populated by one million individual citizens, each with their own daily routine, emotions, beliefs and loyalties? We've been hearing these gobsmacking boasts for a couple of years now, and while the technology running *Republic* is obviously breathtaking, details of actual

gameplay have been scarce. At last year's E3, *Republic* was really just an impressive engine – this year's event was Elixir's chance to show off what the game was really about, not just how you could zoom in from outer space to the tessellations on every individually modelled cabbage leaf.

The story remains essentially unchanged: you are the leader of one

"One million individual citizens, each with their own daily routine, emotions, beliefs and loyalties"

of 16 factions in the fictional Soviet splinter-state of Novistrana, and you must use any means at your disposal to topple the president and assume control. There are five paths you can choose to achieve this: political, military, criminal, religious or business. The idea is that the route to success is largely unscripted, with endless gameplay possibilities arising from the

sophistication of the AI, which – no surprises – is another revolutionary technical achievement. The means to power is the support of the largest number of people, achieved through rallies, riots, assassinations, public speeches, disseminating propaganda and so on. While specialist characters may be recruited as key allies, the remainder of the population are expected to react to your persuasion techniques in a totally natural way, based purely on complex AI algorithms. The behaviour of the other faction leaders has been developed with cutting-edge 'behavioural cloning' techniques to give them intelligence, cunning and unique personalities. However, multiplayer may be where the game realises its true potential,

with up to 16 endlessly inventive and devious human players vying for control of Novistrana's million citizens.

The latest demos have given a much better picture of how *Republic* will play, demonstrating an intimate level of involvement with your specialist supporters. One scenario involved a rival faction using religion to win support, with a preacher doing a soapbox propaganda routine in the public square. When a hired thug failed to sway him, more persuasive means were employed, in the form of a sniper rifle. While these screenshots may suggest finger-on-the-trigger action, it's actually more of an over-the-shoulder standpoint. The success of this bold free-form structure ultimately lies in the power of the AI, and we can only pray that the gameplay matches the technology. Of course, with a project this ambitious, and a Lionhead protégé at the helm, did somebody say "release slippage"?

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intel

Five sequels and a movie deal are in the offing. Probably.

Switching between the squad members will be a good tactic.

"Is my chicken ready hun!"

Enemies will morph terrifyingly in mid attack.

PROJECT EDEN

⊙ Eidos • ETA September • www.eidosinteractive.co.uk/games/embed.html?gmid=84

The next hit from team *Tomb Raider* could be gameplay paradise found

In the eyes of most gamers the name of Core Design will always be synonymous with one game, the seminal classic that spawned a cultural icon and sex symbol to millions, *Rick Dangerous*. Er... *Tomb Raider*. The creative team behind the original and best Lara Croft adventure didn't waste their time on any of the subsequent sequels; instead they've been slaving away to bring you their next opus, now nearing completion, *Project Eden*. E3 gave us the best insight yet into the details of this futuristic squad-based action/adventure, and we're now keener than ever for it to go gold.

One thing that became clear is that *Project Eden* is not about to turn the genre on its head, instead aiming for solid and familiar gameplay, yet suffused

with loads of minor technical breakthroughs and flashes of ingenuity. The advanced camera system, for example, allows you to flick freely between first- and third-person perspectives, as well as enabling full 360 degree aiming in third-person mode. The result is the ability to loose pot shots over your shoulder while fleeing madly from enemies, without recourse to a Lara-esque lock-on system. And in a move that's sure to set a precedent for every subsequent FPS, you can finally see your own torso when you look down in first-person mode.

The gameplay is just as overflowing with ideas, offering a blend of strategic puzzle-solving, tactical use of equipment and straight-out shooting, along with a narrative depth to rival *Half-Life*. The strategy

arises from the management of your four squad members, each of whom have skills and strengths vital to your mission. The single-player game is basically in place, and appears set to offer a hugely atmospheric and compelling experience, if slightly bent to a console audience. The multiplayer aspects are an even more mouth-watering proposition, with squad-based co-operative play and deathmatching planned, which will be geared far more towards the PC fraternity.

Some of us at *ZONE* are reserving judgement on this one, but it certainly appears to have all the right ingredients. At the very least it will propel the genre forward technically, but if it all comes off it could offer a superbly balanced gameplay experience.

Each Mech's weapons can be customised.

"The wrong trousers, Gromit."

The landscape will become littered with wrecks and craters.

PREPARE TO MEET YOUR MECHA

⊙ Microsoft • ETA June • www.microsoft.com/games/mechcommander2

MechCommander 2 is striding towards completion

Whatever the reason, the *MechWarrior* games have never received as much attention over here as they have in the US. Perhaps us Brits are rather too attached to our wheeled vehicles to have delusions that we might one day stride about a in a pair of mechanical trousers.

But one thing we do like in this land of fish and chips is real-time strategy, especially when it requires a tactical savvy the likes of *C&C* rarely demands. This is exactly why it could be worth getting excited about *MechCommander 2*, in which you get to build, select and direct a squad of motorised strides.

Previewed back in *PCZ* #97, we won't go into too much detail here, but with a brand new 3D engine and gameplay to match its 1998 predecessor, we could be looking at one of the best games in the genre, certainly the best *MechWarrior* game to date. Keep your eyes peeled for a review next issue.

DUSK TILL DAWN

⊙ Cryo Interactive • ETA TBC

Vampire sequel back from the dead

From Dusk Till Dawn was one of those schizophrenic/brilliant/ trashy/crap (delete as applicable) films that was famous for its absurdly out-of-all-proportions cast that included Harvey Keitel, George Clooney, Antonio Banderas, Quentin Tarantino and the funny half of Cheech & Chong. Starting off in familiar heist territory, it quickly turned into a tits 'n' vampire exploitation flick, which most people quietly enjoyed without admitting the fact.

Anyhow, after a couple of straight-to-video pieces of garbage masquerading as sequels, Cryo has just announced the game, itself a sequel or sorts, chronicling the events after the film and revolving round Clooney's character, Seth Gecko. It takes place on a boat and we know for a fact it's going to involve loads of vampires and a fair slice of blood and guts. We say that because: a) we've seen the screenshots, and b) it's being developed by one Hubert Chardot, creator of *Alone In The Dark* and *The Devil Inside*. With that sort of pedigree it might even be half-decent, unlike the straight-to-video offerings we have had to endure.

Cover yourself up man, that's disgusting.

The vampires relax after a hard day's night.

PLAY FOR FREE AT THE PLAYING FIELDS

There's a bar to retire to when you get tired of fragging.

A gamer's paradise, The Playing Fields is a computer games bar where you can relax and play games the way they are meant to be played – with someone else. Just a 30-second walk away from Warren Street Tube station (Northern and Victoria lines), you can find it at 143 Whitfield Street, London W1.

Once there, you can jump on one of the 23 state-of-the-art machines on offer, and either play via a network or over the Net on games such as *Counter-Strike*, *Unreal Tournament*, *Giants*, *Delta*

Force: Land Warrior, *Sacrifice*, *Rune* and many others. Each machine boasts an AMD 1.1GHz processor, 128Mb SDRAM, a 17in monitor and a NVIDIA Geforce 2 GTS graphics card – no less.

You have to be aged at least 14 to play and ID may be required. The Playing Fields is open seven days a week from noon to 11pm (10pm on Sundays). For prices and more information, check out www.theplayingfields.co.uk.

And for a free hour of play, simply fill in the slip (right) and take it along with you to The Playing Fields.

Turn to page 98 for details of the *PC ZONE* Readers' Challenge.

The outdoor environments are superb.

"Right you go for Matt, I'll take down that bastard Hanks."

His last words were simply... "bugger".

Wish you weren't here?

THEY DON'T LIKE IT UP 'EM

⊕ EA • ETA October • www.2015.com

Your turn to give it to Jerry

Don't say we're not spoiling you rotten with these fantastic new screenshots from 2015's *Medal Of Honor: Allied Assault*, the game that's set to bring all the gritty realism of *Saving Private Ryan* to your PC. We always suspected that *Medal Of Honor* was probably too good for the PlayStation, and now its ascent to the PC has made

us feel all warm and fuzzy inside. God bless you Mr Spielberg, you have washed yourself clean of *batteries not included*.

Those who poured scorn over the *Quake III* engine's ability to produce convincing outdoor scenes may have been well and truly sent to bed with no supper. The outside shots are some of the best we've ever seen and the sheer attention to detail is exemplary, right down to leaves on the trees (and let's face it, good foliage has never been an area

game designers have excelled in, except when it comes to facial shrubbery).

The gameplay promises a much more stealth-oriented approach to combating the enemy, and we're not just talking about pinching towels off their sun lounges. Your missions will involve sabotage and we hope the gratuitous use of sticky bombs, rescuing prisoners and assassinating Nazi officers. EA has even been working with the Congressional Medal of Honor Society to ensure the accuracy of the game.

CHARTS

Everything you need to know about which games are selling by the shedload. Plus the buzz on the streets – where you tell us what's hot and what's not

Black & White is still looking down at the opposition.

THE Virgin megastores TOP 10

MAY	JUNE	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
1	1	**BLACK AND WHITE**	LIONHEAD	EA	95%
3	2	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: SEASON 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
2	3	COSSACKS: THE EUROPEAN WARS	GSC	CDV	89%
9	4	C&C: RED ALERT 2	WESTWOOD	EA	82%
4	5	HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS	VALVE	VIVENDI	95%
RE	6	SUDDEN STRIKE	CDV	CDV	85%
6	7	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
8	8	THE SIMS: COLLECTOR'S EDITION	MAXIS	EA	N/A
7	9	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%
5	10	THE SIMS: HOUSE PARTY	MAXIS	EA	50%

THE ChartTrack TOP 10 ELSPA

MAY	JUNE	TITLE	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	SCORE
1	1	BLACK AND WHITE	LIONHEAD	EA	95%
3	2	THE SIMS: HOUSE PARTY	MAXIS	EA	50%
2	3	COSSACKS: THE EUROPEAN WARS	GSC	CDV	89%
6	4	HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS	VALVE	VIVENDI	95%
4	5	THE SIMS	MAXIS	EA	86%
5	6	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 00/01	SPORTS INTERACTIVE	EIDOS	93%
NE	7	DESPERADOS: WDOA	SPELLBOUND	INFOGRAMES	82%
NE	8	TROPICO	POPTOP SOFTWARE	TAKE 2	59%
7	9	WHO WANTS TO BE A MILLIONAIRE	HOTHOUSE	EIDOS	62%
9	10	THE SIMS: LIVIN' IT UP	MAXIS	EA	63%

Compiled by Chart Track © ELSPA

COMPETITION

THE BUZZ ON THE STREETS

The chart looks pretty much as I expected. It's good to see *Cossacks* still there. One thing though, how can *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* still be in the chart? "You had 20-odd quid, you now have a crap game" Hahahaha… ahem. And why on Earth isn't *Tribes 2* in there? It's easily better than *Counter-Strike* and *Unreal Tournament* put together. And while I'm on this subject, why isn't it a classic? It should be.
Milesbond7

The Sims is *still* there? Taking up three places? I think Will Wright must have bought about two million copies. Surely it's impossible for a game to stay in the charts for so long? *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* is still hanging on and *Black & White* is in its rightful place. It's good to see *Half-Life* is still up there too.
Richymon

What the hell is *Tropico*? How did it even get in here? And what's *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire* still doing here? Good to see that *Black & White* is in its deserved place, though.
Seun Shobande

I'm glad *B&W* is still at the top, knocking off that pile of doggy do which was on top before it.
_Da10n1_

Everything here is crap, except for *Black & White*, *Half-Life* and *Desperados*.
Nmennie

This is possibly the most boring chart in the world. Even Dennis Norden is more entertaining.
Monkey

CHART COMMENT
BASED ON CHART TRACK TOP 10

Sod the chart comment this month, what's the point? Perhaps I should use this section to rant on about the baseness of the human spirit or the injustices of poverty instead of how turgid and stagnant the charts have become, with sub-standard add-on packs taking up far too many places, and quality releases such as *Eurofighter Typhoon* and *Tribes 2* (12th and 13th respectively) languishing behind what are obviously inferior games. I mean, I ask you, two new entries? It's pathetic. With stats like this is it any wonder that developers churn out the same old rehashes of tried and tested formulas? At least *Black & White* is holding on to top spot. Anyway, about that rant I had planned…
Martin Korda

RETRO CHARTS

1 YEAR AGO...

1 **Star Wars: Force Commander** *(Activision)*
2 **Soldier Of Fortune** *(Activision)*
3 **The Sims** *(EA)*
4 **F1 2000** *(EA)*
5 **Star Trek: Armada** *(Activision)*

2 YEARS AGO...

1 **Championship Manager 3** *(Eidos)*
2 **Tomb Raider II** *(Eidos)*
3 **TOCA 2: Touring Cars** *(Codemasters)*
4 **Star Wars: X-Wing Alliance** *(Activision)*
5 **Rollercoaster Tycoon** *(Hasbro)*

5 YEARS AGO...

1 **Duke Nukem 3D** *(US Gold)*
2 **Civilization** *(Microprose)*
3 **Theme Park** *(EA)*
4 **C& Conquer** *(EA)*
5 **Encarta** *(Microsoft)*

How much are you willing to pay for this little lot then?

MONEY FOR OLD ROPE

£100 for *Ultima VII*... anyone??

One of the many highlights of our day is sifting through the post, discarding letters and ripping straight into the jiffy bags in the hope they contain playable code of up-and-coming games. Imagine our delight then when a huge box arrived, full of dozens of games. Unfortunately they were all old, with a note from *ZONE* regular Paul Presley saying "This is all my old shit my girlfriend is making me throw out. Please give them a home."

Inside were copies of *Monkey Island 1* and *2*, a couple of old *Ultima* games, *Red Storm Rising*, Westwood Studios' old *Mines Of Titan*, the original *B-17 Flying Fortress*, *A-10 Tank Killer*, *Midwinter II* and even a copy of Windows 3.1 (coo).

With space at a premium we thought it best we just auction the whole lot off, plus throw in some other games (some of which should work on modern PCs) that are cluttering up our cupboards. If you fancy a few battered boxes filled with oversized manuals and 5¼in floppy discs, then all you have to do is email us at **letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk** (subject heading "Prezzer's Pap", pledging how much you are prepared to pay for it all. The highest bidder to come in before June 24 gets the lot (and in all we're talking about 40 or 50 old games). Then send us a cheque, made payable to the charity of your choice, we'll send you the games and forward the cheque. You never know, the whole lot could be worth thousands in a few years.

If you want to find out more about old games, go to **www.mobygames.com**.

TALK TO THE GODS...

And if they don't reply join Sports Interactive on ICQ

Championship Manager is the most accurate simulation of the cruellest game on the planet, and the Collyer brothers are, quite rightly, considered as objects of worship in the *ZONE* office despite the fact that they're both Everton supporters. We've been down the pub with them and chewed the fat over a couple of jars, and found out that they're rather personable chaps as well, so we asked them if they'd mind giving over some of their time to chat to you, their most adoring fans. They agreed, and on Thursday, June 14 you can join them online for an hour of frivolity and intellectual debate.

So whether you want to vent your spleen and rail against the fact that Everton has falsely high statistics (how on Earth did they manage to stay in the Premiership this season?) or you want to type into your dialogue box while kneeling in front of the screen, all you need to do is log onto the Sports Interactive website – **www.sigames.com** – and hit the IRC button. The chat starts at 4pm sharp. We'll see you there.

Have a wee chat with these blokes in the privacy of your own bedroom.

Make sure you stock up on baked beans and bottled water for this one.

Transport planes will be used to bring in fresh meat to the front line.

It all kicks off in the Middle East, just as Nostradamus predicted.

WORLD WAR III

⭐ TopWare • ETA summer 2001 • www.topware.com

Protect & survive? Not a chance

Don't know about you lot, but those of us old enough to remember the paranoid '80s, with those ridiculous-yet-frightening public information films, movies like *When The Wind Blows* and *The Day After*, and of course CND, may like to know that hot on the heels of *Operation Flashpoint* comes another game aiming to have us ripping doors off their hinges and painting the windows white. This time it's a strategy offering and it goes by the no-messin' title of *World War III*.

Unfortunately for those hoping to see mushroom clouds on the 3D horizon, we've yet to hear whether nuclear weapons will be an insane tactical option for players – unless you count 'weapons of mass destruction' as such. However, there will be an arsenal of far more visually impressive chemical and biological weapons, which should provide a first for computer games, as we'll see soldiers coughing up their stomachs into their gasmasks while the civilian population run around screaming as their blistering skin peels to the ground and their eyeballs flap about their cheeks like coddled eggs. Well, maybe not.

Anyway, rather than set the game in such a paranoid decade as the '80s, *WWIII* will be staged more-or-less in modern times, the flashpoint being a fictional second Gulf War that escalates into a full global conflict. Soldiers that survive the germs and gases of modern warfare will pick up experience points throughout the game and like developer TopWare's previous RTS titles – *Earth 2150* and *The Moon Project* – the game campaign will be fully dynamic, with theatres opening up across Europe, Asia and America. Civilians too will have an effect on gameplay along with seasonal weather – nuclear winter not withstanding – and true day/night cycles. Stick a few nukes in and we'll be sorted.

GOTHIC

⭐ Piranha Bytes • TBA

A German RPG that could remove the idiot factor

If forthcoming RPG *Gothic* is anything to go by, the next evolution in the genre will not be the snore-triggered caffeine drip nor mechanical matchsticks which force your eyes to stay open, but the artificial dungeon master. That is to say, a more intelligent approach to the old problem of having a world populated by idiots that parrot the same three or four phrases over and over until you kill them in frustration.

German developer Piranha Bytes has come up with a gaming system that injects consequence and memory into its NPCs, in an effort to create a more malleable and realistic gaming experience.

Set for release here later in the year, *Gothic* is trying as far as possible to add the illusion of *EverQuest* style interactivity to the single-player experience. They particularly pride themselves on the AI of the game's NPCs, who apparently have their own lives and routines, and forge alliances and grudges both independently and as a result of the player's interaction.

The game is set inside a massive, open air, high security mining prison, cut off from the outside world by a huge magical force field. The idea is to negotiate your way through the prison and its various rival gangs in a bid for freedom.

ROBIN HOOD: DEFENDER OF THE CROWN

⭐ Cinemaware • ETA late 2002 • www.cinemaware.com

Rob the rich to give to the poor? Yeah right

While we talk a lot about genre-crossing games such as *Deus Ex* and *Black & White* as if it's something new, we often forget golden oldies like *North & South* and *Defender Of The Crown*, both excellent examples of their day, both combining platform action and strategy, the latter of course currently being updated in full-3D form as *Robin Hood: Defender Of The Crown*.

The new Cinemaware team promise 3D jousting, real-time strategy in the form of 3D castle sieges and massed land battles, plus *Risk*-style resource management across a map of old England – the aim to oust Prince John and return King Richie to the throne as the eponymous Bob Hood.

Unfortunately, we've a long wait for the final game – well over a year. Still, you could always download the old game on your favourite Amiga or Atari ST emulator.

'Your mother was a hamster and your father smelt of elderberries.'

I'M A COWBOY, ON A STEEL HORSE I RIDE

⭐ Zombie Studios • ETA TBA • www.zombie.com

(All together now)… I'm *Wanted: Dead Or Alive*

"Sorry ladies and gentlemen, we'll have to stop here a spell due to a signal failure at Arse Creek."

As well as horses, you'll be able to ride donkeys, trains and rosy-cheeked ladies.

With *America* and *Desperados* now on the shelves (not to mention the dire *Wild Wild West* tie-in) it seems the American West is in vogue for the first time since LucasArts released *Outlaws*. The good news for those wishing to fire off their six-shooters and Winchesters once more is that behind the latest Cowboy shooter is Zombie Studios, creators of *Spec Ops*, one of the first tactical shooters and undoubtedly a major

influence behind more recent gems such as *Rogue Spear* and *Operation Flashpoint*.

Going by the working title of *Wanted: Dead Or Alive*, the central character is an ex-sheriff and farmer, returning home after fighting in the American Civil War. Sadly, he finds his family butchered and farm razed to the ground. As you would expect after such a turn of events, he is somewhat irked, and so begins a bloody rampage of vengeance.

Although billed as first-person shooter, *Wanted* will feature plenty of role-playing elements as you build up skills and cash, earned by hunting down wanted criminals along the way. You can then upgrade your weapons, equipment and preferred mode of transport, namely horses. And yes, shooting from the saddle is an option.

Powered by the very capable LithTech engine (*No One Lives Forever*, *Aliens Vs Predator 2*), weapons will include knives,

six-shooters, shotgun, a buffalo rifle, and the trusty Derringer pistol. In multiplayer games we are also promised a branding iron with which to humiliate the enemy and barrels of gunpowder that you can roll down hills. Multiplayer game modes will include Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Capture The Flag (Bank Robbery) and Breakout, which will be similar to *Counter-Strike*'s hostage rescue missions. Something for everyone then.

A golf club management game? The words barrel and scraping spring instantly to mind.

That castle looks like it could use a lick of paint.

FORE!

⭐ EA • ETA autumn 2001 • www.simgolfclub.com

Start polishing your shaft, it's *Sid Meier's SimGolfClub*

If you haven't already guessed from the title, *SimGolfClub* is a strategy game in which you get to build a golf course and fit it out with all kinds of customer friendly facilities in an effort to to draw in punters and keep them there. Apparently, you are going to be able to design your dream course with an easy to use course designer. Needless to say we'll believe it when we see it.

If a single golf course and a shop that sells all sorts of stupid trousers is too low a goal for you, then you'll have the chance to build an entire golfing resort, with luxury hotels and even your very own airstrip.

Just like every other Sid Meier strategy game before

it, *SimGolfClub* will allow you to manage every minute detail of your creation, from membership prices to the pars for each hole.

One particularly good idea is that you'll be able to challenge your customers to a round on any one of your creations. Better still, you'll be able to import your characters from *The Sims* and see how they fare on your creation. As the CEO of your company there'll be the option to set up tournaments and attempt to entice members away from other golfing establishments by bribing them with simply irresistible offers.

We were going to round things off with another hilarious gag from the golf-club-as-penis lexicon, but to hell with it, we'll save it for next time.

The Man who KNOWS

A WORLD GONE MAD

Details have emerged of a sick marriage ceremony conducted at a clandestine meeting of trolls, goblins and wizards. The wedding took place in front of some 1,200 guests at the **San Diego Fan Faire**, essentially an *EverQuest* convention. In the first wedding of its kind, **Madolina**, a half-elf bard, married **Baldric**, a barbarian warrior. Asking for the blessings of their gods, **Erollisi Marr** and the **Tribunal**, the pair pledged their love and exchanged rings, moving some of the more unstable audience members to tears as the bride and groom were pronounced Baldric and Madolina Greyhaven. Other activities included a live quest, in which **Necromancers**, **Druids** and **Wyverns** minced about a **Sheraton Hotel** in full costume, solving puzzles and collecting platinum coins. One attendee, **Kazroh**, admitted: "I gave a lot of thought to the costume and everything I put together was pretty much authentic to my actual dress on my play character, basically a low- to mid-level halfling. I think my sense of humour came through well, and although the costume cost me over US$250 to make and more time than I can even count, it was well worth it."

Meanwhile, **Denise Harris**, the *EverQuest* model who appears at such events in the guise of the character **Firiona Vie**, has explained how she got the part. Apparently, her mother saw an *EverQuest* display box and was amazed by the likeness between the character and her daughter, who went straight to the Internet. Denise beamed: "When I entered the site, all of a sudden there was a full screenshot of this elf girl that had my face. I was so shocked I screamed and my roommates came running. My roomies were as surprised as me. The weird thing was it wasn't just the face that was the same; the body was uncannily similar as well. The legs are my length with similar muscle tone, the waist was long just like mine, and even the chest size was the same." She got in touch with **Sony**, and the rest is history, her career reduced to dressing up like an idiot while bearded virgins sinisterly eye her from a distance.

Further female game character strangeness involves *Tomb Raider* actress, **Angelina Jolie**, who is reported to have worn a glass pendant round her neck containing drops of husband **Billy Bob Thornton**'s blood. The clearly loopy star has also apparently decided to keep some of the guns from the *Tomb Raider* film set, explaining: "I became really close to them and wore them every day. so I want them here." As for the role, Jolie lisped: "I wanted to really understand someone being raised a certain way in England, their culture, the accent and also the class that she's raised in – the manners. She's Lady **Lara Croft** and I had very little practice in being a lady." Don't worry about that, love.

Football from the top down. Just like Coventry City. (Watch it - Ed.)

Last time we saw a game like this, Alex Ferguson was still in Scotland. Where he belongs.

REMATCH OF THE DAY

⭐ Steve Screech • ETA October

Original developer brings *Kick Off* back to life

Back in the glory days, when the Carling Premiership was still about the beautiful game and not financial gain, two giants battled it out for domination of the top-down football sim. *Sensible Soccer* and *Kick Off* are still cited by many as the most playable football games to date, and old-skool nostalgists should prepare their handkerchiefs for the re-emergence of one of the legends. (If you don't know what we're on about, put down *FIFA* for a second and listen up.)

Steve Screech (half of the original development team, along with Dino Dini) is hard at work on *Ultimate Kick-Off*, a remake and remix of the age-old classic. We've just finished playing beta 1.1 and we can happily report that the tweaks don't take away any of the finesse you need just to keep the ball under control. The visuals have been tweaked and other changes have been included, such as the ability to dink the ball (rather than chip) when you're close to the goal. You can also run your goalkeeper out to narrow down the angle if the opposing attackers are free and perform free-form celebrations after you've scored your latest cracker.

We're expecting to get a playable demo of the game next month, which you'll be able to try out exclusively on *CD ZONE*.

SIGMA: THE ADVENTURES OF REX CHANCE

⭐ Microsoft • ETA Winter 2001 • www.relic.com

More than the sum of its parts… and we're not talking about *PC ZONE* here

Relic was founded in 1997 and quickly went on to produce one of the sleeper hits of the last decade. *Homeworld* was the first fully 3D strategy game, not only helping to redefine a genre but giving a wake-up call to lazy programmers the world over. Trouble is, it was bloody hard, too hard for most people (except Paul Presley, who went completely overboard, famously claiming "it's what gaming is really all about").

Alex Garden, head honcho at Relic, concurred, and stated his next game would be more accessible. Bad news, you might think, but enter *Sigma: The Adventures of Rex Chance*, one of the weirdest games we've seen in a long time, complete with one of the most inaccessible titles this side of the English language.

In essence, it's a 3D real-time strategy game, but instead of playing with pretend robots and harvesters, *Sigma* lets you play God with 50 real-life creatures including monkeys, scorpions and zebra. You can splice any of these creatures together using the *Sigma* technology to make your very own genetic abominations, which sport the offensive/defensive characteristics of the original animals, giving you access to round about oh, thousands of unique units. Couple this with the *Sigma* world, which sports four different ecologies with unique fauna and flora, indigenous creatures and complex weather conditions as well as day and night missions, and you've got the potential for another intriguing and complex RTS – no matter how accessible young Alex claims it to be.

It's clearly at a very early stage of development.

Could it be a new sub-genre – the animal husbandry RTS?

Polly the sheep has nothing on this.

RING LORDS

⭐ Vivendi Universal • ETA 2002 • www.sierrastudios.com

Sierra announces the inevitable Tolkien tie-ins

The forthcoming big-screen Tolkien epics have already started a whirlwind of all things Middle Earthy, including Sierra Studios' announcement to develop a number of games for all major gaming platforms over the next eight years based on *The Hobbit* and *Lord Of The Rings* (just the books, mind).

"*The Hobbit* and *Lord Of The Rings* are the pre-eminent fantasy works of our time and represent one of the strongest brands in the entertainment industry," effused Hubert Joly, CWEO of Vivendi Universal. "They provide a tremendous amount of rich material from which we expect to make some of the best fantasy games ever created." We'll be the judge of that, come early 2002, when the first game is due for release. *The Fellowship Of The Ring* is currently in development by Seattle-based WXP Inc, though it's typically and rather short-sightedly being planned for release on Xbox first. This seems ridiculous considering Tolkien's orc-drenched world is so clearly suited to the PC RPG genre. Let's hope Sierra hasn't bitten off more than they can chew, because where their God is concerned, Tolkien fans take no prisoners.

In place of actual game art, here's a beard.

And a bad guy. No goblins sorry.

WIN SOME EAR TICKLERS

COMPETITION

When these force feedback headphones from Evergreen Technologies landed on our desks, a chuckle was heard on the other side of Oxford Street. Then we put them on our heads and had to admit to being a bit impressed – and that's before the force feedback kicks in. Cleverly, the cans vibrate to low frequencies, which means you don't have to install any drivers to feel your lobes getting tickled, and when you tire of the gimmick you can turn back to standard sound with a flick of the switch on the cable. Why not answer the following simple question, and win a pair without having to splash any cash? Then go and tell your friends how good they are.

QUESTION: If you were a grasshopper where would you put your RumbleFX headphones?

Just answer the above question and send it on a postcard, along with *all* the information requested, to the address below.

⭐ Name/address/postcode/daytime phone number/email address/job title/ company name/age if under 18. ⭐ Please tell us if you do not wish to receive details of further special offers or new products from other companies. ⭐ Are you a current subscriber to PC ZONE?

Answers on a postcard to: *PC ZONE* Chart Compo (CPCZ0601A), Dennis Publishing, PO Box 154, Bradford BD1 5RZ. Closing date: June 27, 2001.

⭐ Terms and conditions: Winners will be notified by post. No cash alternative. Prizes not necessarily as shown. No correspondence will be entered into. The editor's decision is final. All the other usual competition rules, conditions and restrictions apply.

HOTSHOTS

No it's not ready yet, but it's looking bloody good

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

Activison • Out: when it's ready

We were hoping that we'd be playing this game by now, rather than scribbling more words enthusing about it, but *Return To Castle Wolfenstein* is still in the labs. Set in Germany during WWII, the game is far more than an update of the old classic, and from what we've seen so far, the game is set to propel first-person shooters back into the forefront of PC gaming.

Before we went to E3, the last we'd heard was that the game was being held back to include the new Team Arena code from id, meaning that developers Gray Matter could go to town with monstrous outdoor locations. We've seen the opening beach assault and this can only be good news, despite the delay. We then arrived at E3, saw the game running, fell in love with it all over again and asked if we could take a playable copy home with us. We were politely shown the door.
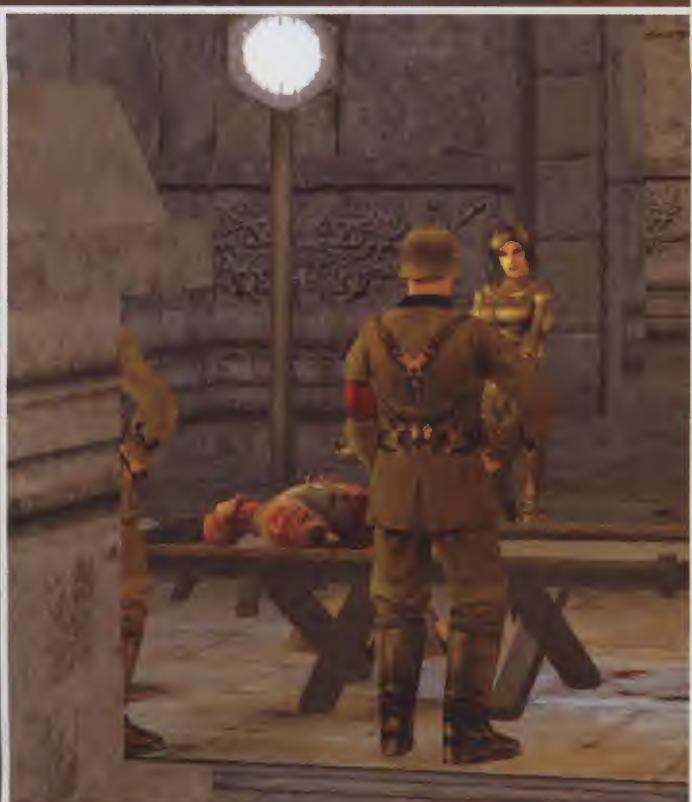
HOTSHOTS

MAX PAYNE

○ Take 2 • ETA late summer (supposedly)

Almost as old as Headroom...

It looked brilliant. Then it looked like the game was going to disappear without a trace. Now we get to see the game again at E3 and we're told that it's going to be released some time this summer. Yeah? Well we've heard that before.

However, still looking as impressive as ever, this third-person shooter, which owes a massive debt to *The Matrix*, actually appears as if it's going to survive to become more than just a graphical demo. Check back next month when we bring you a full preview as part of our shooters round-up from E3.
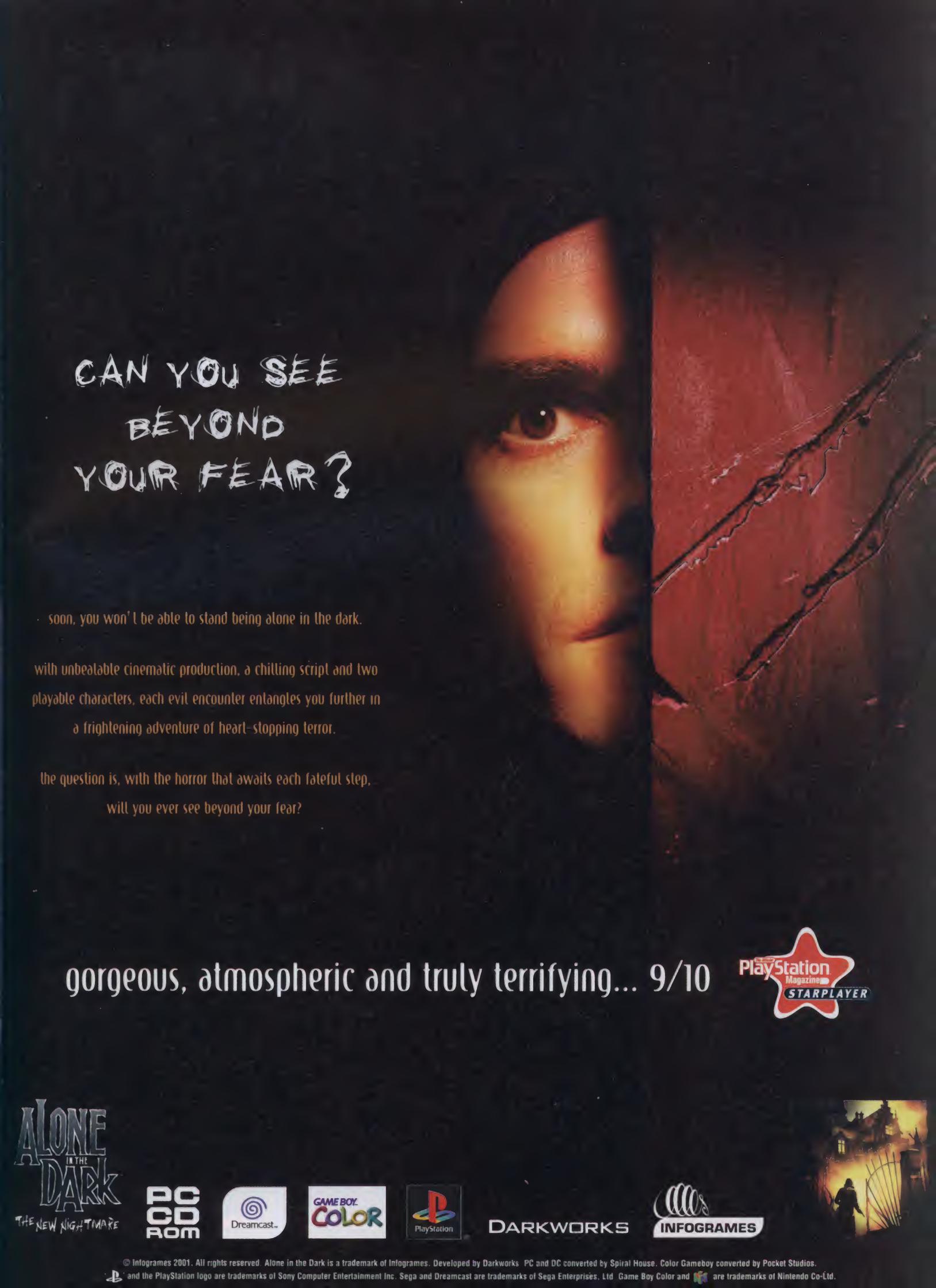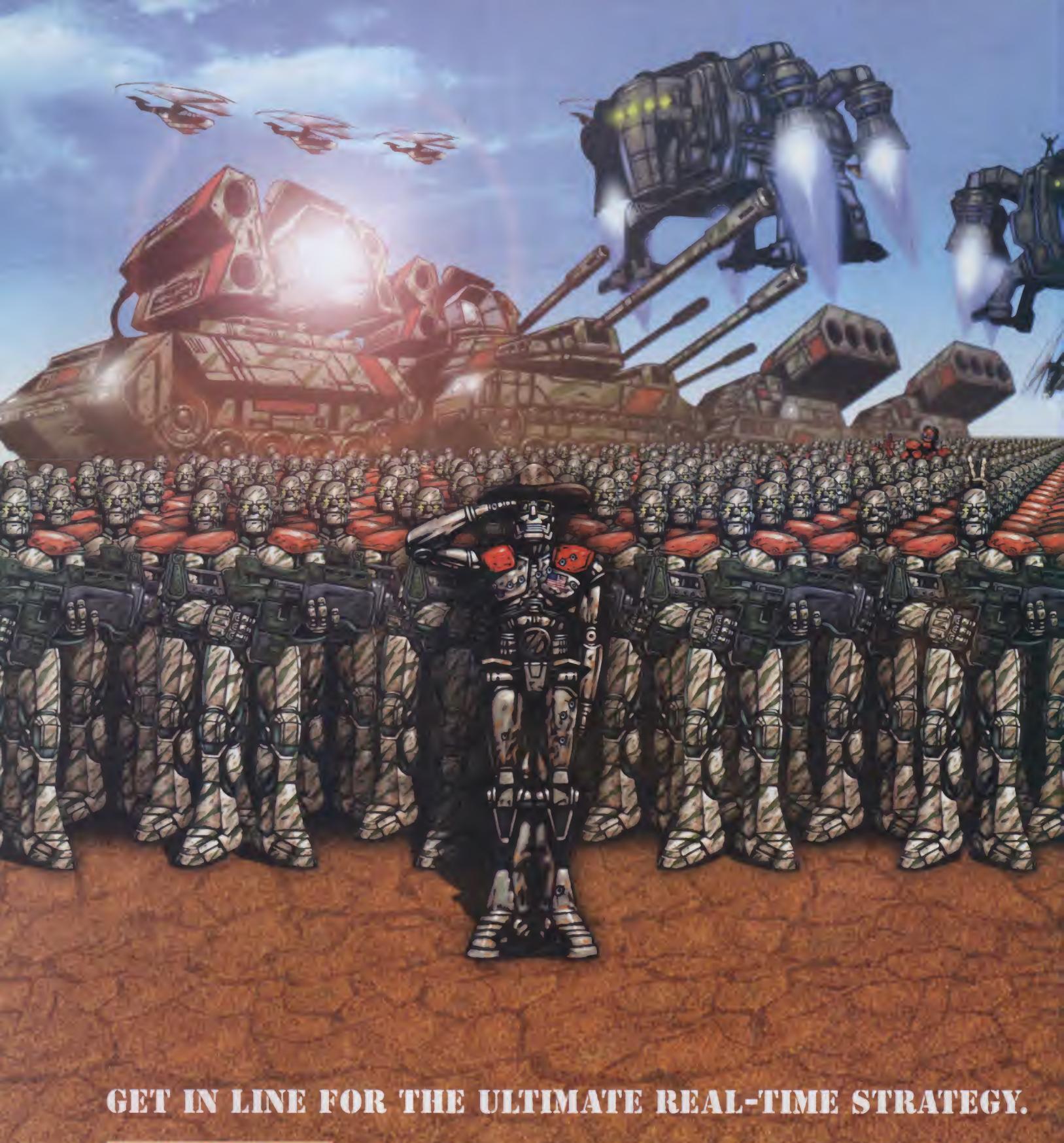
GET IN LINE FOR THE ULTIMATE REAL-TIME STRATEGY.
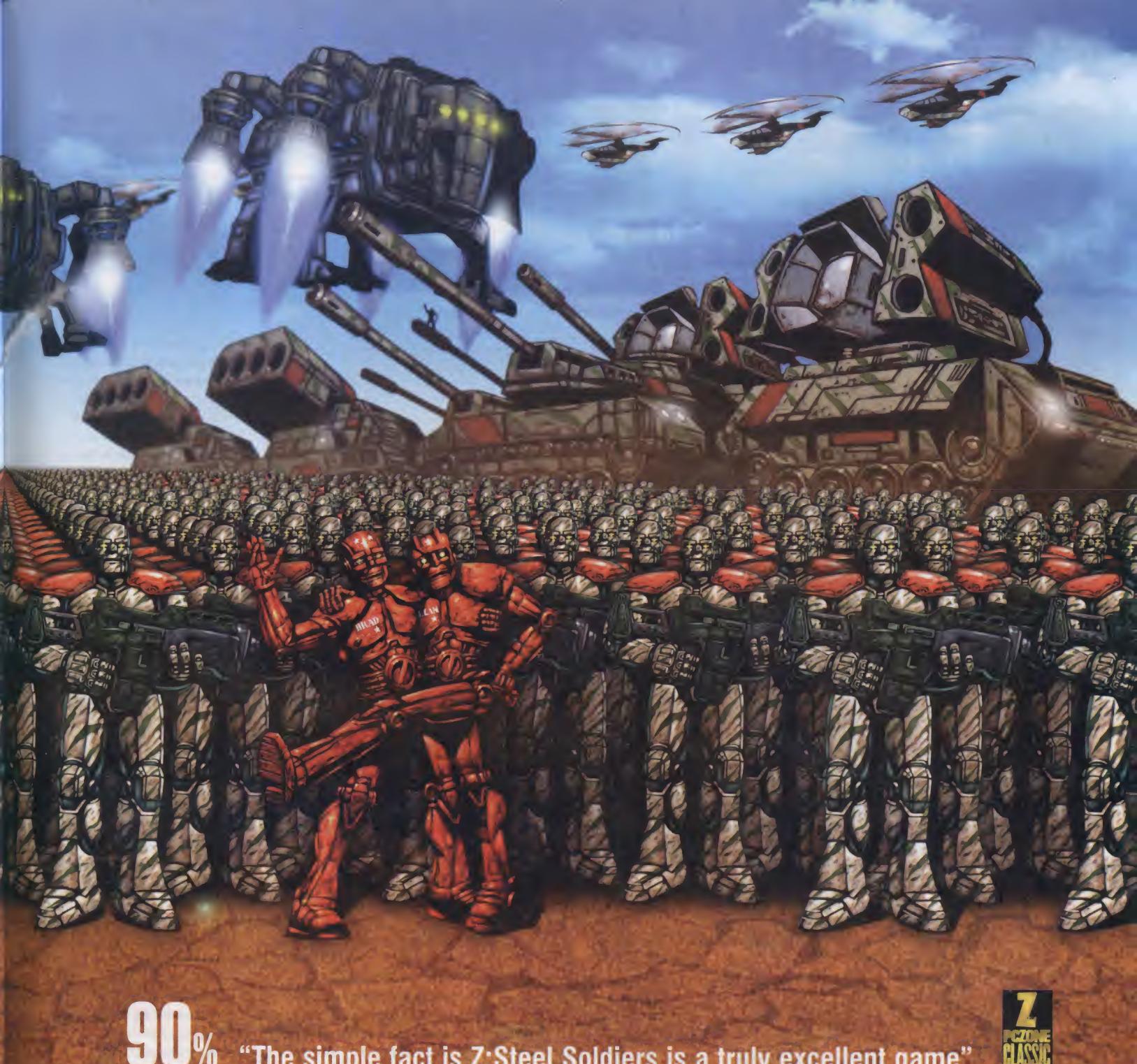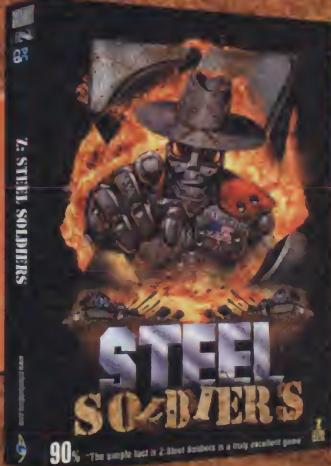
MAILBOX

Got something to say to us? Nice, nasty or otherwise, get it off your chest and if it's interesting enough we'll print it

⭐ **ANSWERED BY** Dave Woods

Nice game. Not so nice price.

SERIOUSLY PRICEY

I read your review of *Serious Sam* and decided it looked like a good, fun blaster, which would require no thought and would provide a welcome contrast to sneaky shooters like *Project IGI* – and also at a nice, budget price. So, I went along to my local games store to purchase a copy, but stopped immediately when I saw the price tag was not £19.99, but £29.99. Now, trusting your information I approached a member of staff and interrogated him on the price difference, pointing out that your mag said the price was £20. His reply was merely that you can never trust magazines, they're normally wrong. Any idea why shops are charging full price for this budget title?

Robert Shapland

⭐ "Never trust magazines, they're normally wrong." He must subscribe to one of our rival publications... In this instance, the RRP was upped to £29.99 by the publishers just before release. Rest assured, we

were as annoyed about it as you were.

TITS OOT

The Man Who Knows' prissy objections to *Daily Sport Football Strip* got on my tits. How come it's considered OK to see the insides of human bodies depicted in graphic detail, but not the outsides. No one has anything original to say about the morality of videogames anymore – the lines are well and truly drawn – so why don't reviewers just restrict their comments to whether they think a game is any good or not.

Barry Sheridan

⭐ Prissy objections? The Man Who Knows? I think you've missed the point. There's nothing wrong with gazing adoringly at the outsides of bodies – we do it all the time – but there's a lot that's wrong with the *Daily Sport*. Work it out for yourself, if you can be bothered. As for restricting our comments to whether

the game is any good or not, we weren't reviewing it – it was a news piece. And the good news? It's so bad we can't even bring ourselves to review it, but if you want a score, pick a number between one and four and stick a percentage sign on the end.

A MAIL READER WRITES...

Re: *PCZ* #101 p26, article 'Out Of Africa'. What's this first-rate mag becoming – a vital information conduit for us news-hungry gamers or a platform for clapped-out, right-on dogma? Used to reading witty, incisive articles, I was more than a bit miffed to cast my minces over last month's adolescent polemic, poorly disguised as a preview of *Zulu Wars*.

So much for dealing with the gaming issues – this for some obscure reason seemed only to incite our misguided writer to rail against dear old Blighty and her poor downtrodden millions. I'd expect to read such tripe as "this nation of insular xenophobes" in the *Red Star* or perhaps the *Walford Gazette*, but *PC ZONE*? What are you on?

So, a few words of advice *PC ZONE*. Get rid of this historically challenged smug-mug with nothing to vent his jaundiced spleen at other than our long-dead ancestors who laid the foundations for the oh-so-comfy lifestyle he now takes for granted, and send him to Whitehall where he can deface a few statues or bomb out a McDonalds. In the meantime, recruit somebody who can write a review without spilling out their unwanted and unconsidered political hang-ups. I feel much better now.

Scott Hegley

⭐ Let me guess. You subscribe to *ZONE* and the *Daily Mail*?

MUH, MUH, MUH, MAD

I keep reading people slagging off *The Sims* in your magazine, and damn right too. I bought it when it first appeared and thought, "Ooh what a novel idea". Which it was for about an hour. But then I noticed something. Get up, go to work, eat, have a piss, shower, try to pull fit bird across the road who is obviously not interested. Hang on! This is the same as my real life! What's the point in that?

People think that violent games make people violent. Well, playing *The Sims* has made me realise how dull my own life is and almost makes me want to blow my own head off. Especially seeing as when I go to work, time doesn't accelerate to a ludicrous speed, and I don't keep saying "Rosebud". I'm gonna buy *Black & White* and hope that a giant cow appears on my doorstep one morning.

Dave Bacon

✪ Whatever you say.

BLACK & WHITE DEMO

I am a happy long-time subscriber and I would simply like to know... have I missed something or have you not put a demo of *Black & White* on your cover discs? One of the reasons I subscribe to your magazine is so I can try before I buy so I don't waste loads of money on games I might not like after playing them for 20 minutes. Have you run a demo, or is there anywhere else I can get one from?

Sadie

✪ Unfortunately, Lionhead hasn't released a playable demo for *Black & White* and it doesn't look like they're

going to now. Check our review in issue 100, but also turn to our Feedback pages on page 80 for a few less complimentary words.

PURE AND SIMPLE

First of all I would like to point out an obvious error in the June issue's mailbox. The

Martin Korda or a pretentious git.

heading underneath a pair of mulletted blokes states that they are Martin Korda and David Seaman. Quite obviously one is the Arsenal goalkeeper but the other is that plonker from *Popstars* – Darius.

Secondly, I would say your magazine has a good chuckle factor, but how about a couple of pages dedicated to humour because, after spending far too long installing the latest game/demo only to finally realise it's not worth the CD it's printed on, or your PC is five weeks too old, surely the average PC punter deserves a little cheering up. Anyhow, I digress. Everyone needs a little laughter in their lives, especially when you play games on a machine that

No demo, but there's a feedback special this month (p80), so you can gauge a few views before spending your cash.

needs upgrading ten times a year. Check out the picture I found of Darius (below). I found it on a clip art disc and immediately thought of a certain *PC ZONE* reviewer on the job.

BOOTY RAIDER

How dare they! Those money-hungry Hollywood scoundrels. What in the bloody hell do they *think* they are doing with the *Tomb Raider* movie!? I just read The Man Who Knows, which mentions that there will actually be a (gasp) nude scene with somebody's arse plastered across the silver screen. It will be the arse of Miss Lara Croft, played by Angelina 'saggy cheeks' Jolie.

Lara Croft's behind is a rather sacred thing to us gamers, and though it might be the case that we would enjoy seeing it, we know that it's better she keeps those tiny shorts on. She is an adventurer and action hero, not a sex object.

I don't write this to shake a finger at your fabulous magazine, but to get my point across to the public who read it. I want those idiots at Paramount Pictures to know that they are messing with one of gaming's greatest influences. They'd better

Shorts on, or shorts off? You decide.

> ❝Playing *The Sims* has made me realise how dull my own life is and almost makes me want to blow my own head off❞
>
> **DAVE BACON, WHO NEEDS TO GET OUT MORE**

focus on the action and adventure part of *Tomb Raider*, because if I wanted to see a nice butt, I'd go rent a porno.

Dave

✪ And there we were thinking that said frame of the film was the only one that was worth looking forward to.

COMMENT #1

I read your Comment last month and have to say that I disagree with the sentiments put across. I appreciate that reviews are informative and slightly subjective, but you're the experts and you should be able to point us away from games we're not going to like.

I bought *Black & White* after your glowing review (admittedly I just checked the score at the end and skimmed the text), but I'm not finding it excessively stimulating I have to say. There's too much micro-management and the whole thing's a bit slow-paced for an old action hero like me.

Stuart Barton

✪ *Black & White* is a strategy game and as such it is fairly slow. It's almost impossible to review every game and predict that every person in the world will like it or dislike it, although we do explain what genre the game is in and how it compares to others in the field. Ultimately the best advice (although not the words you'll want hear) I can give you is to read the text, not just the score.

COMMENT #2

I was reading your comments on your aptly titled Comment

page and found myself agreeing completely with you. I think that this article was an extremely excellent response to all those zealots who write in to your Feedback page with rubbish drivel.

People should recognise that scores aren't the only thing to be considered in a review – it makes me wonder why they buy the magazine in the first place. I also happen to be one of those *Half-Life* 'dislikers', and those 'excuses' given by James Lyon are commonly the ones I use against the masses, when confronted by my 'opinion'. Hell, I almost made a website dedicated to 'Half-Life sucks' along with a few of the regulars off the forum, but being a student laziness took over. BTW... Does Paul Presley look scary in that *Hitman* outfit or what? Don't wanna meet him in a dark alley.

DaRM

✪ You won't have to worry about that. Prez only leaves his bedroom when absolutely necessary, and seeing as he's still playing through *Operation Flashpoint* we don't expect to see him anywhere for a long, long time. PCZ

Beard and beautiful...

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

E3 SPECIAL

High-fantasy RPGs are almost considered an 'in' thing thanks to some great recent titles. *Chris Anderson* could not be considered an 'in' thing in any sense of the word, but he does know a thing or two about goblins...

The trusty RPG has come a long way since titles like *Eye Of The Beholder* were considered technically impressive. Increased processor power and 3D graphic technology have given developers the tools they need to create games so immersive and addictive that the genre has seen a resurgence in popularity. This in turn has encouraged many developers to try their hand at the genre, leading to a long list of RPG

titles currently in development. This is a good thing. There is nothing more likely to ensure the life span of a genre than healthy competition, and indeed adventure games have all but died due to a lack of quality titles (unless you consider *Tomb Raider* clones to be 'adventures'). We at *ZONE* have had the good fortune of seeing many of these new

titles first-hand, and are happy to report that RPG fans will be well catered for throughout 2001 and beyond. What follows is a run-down of the best of the titles currently in development. We decided to focus on traditional RPGs (i.e. fantasy) since they represent the majority of the genre, and let's face it, beardy RPGs is where it all began...

NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

⊕ **Publisher** Interplay • **ETA** Early 2002 • **Website** www.neverwinternights.com

This is one of the most promising titles in our round-up, not least because it comes from Bioware, the team who conceived and produced the original *Baldur's Gate*. And, at first glance, the influences from that title are readily apparent. *Neverwinter Nights* is a traditional role-playing game in every sense, and it uses the new Third Edition Dungeons & Dragons rule-set at its heart, as did *Baldur's Gate 1* and *2* and the all-conquering *Planescape: Torment*. Bioware has stated clearly that it intends to make the single-player version of *Neverwinter Nights* as immersive and addictive as the original *Baldur's Gate*, but it is obvious it's hoping the multiplayer version of the game takes off and spawns a thriving community on the Internet. The online side of *Neverwinter Nights* will put you, and several other players, inside a fantasy scenario that is controlled from start to finish by a Dungeon Master (DM). The DM will act as storyteller and will control the number of enemies, traps and obstacles that players have to

face. The DM can also take control of any of the characters in the game and interact with the adventurers, giving the impression of spontaneity in what is effectively a predefined and static game environment. While the boxed version of the game will contain several modules, which players can use to play the online game, it is hoped that players will make their own scenarios and encourage others to put them to the test online. Whatever the case, given

the pedigree of the development team, it's obvious that the single-player game will be enough to satisfy most players, and if the online side of things takes off it will be something of a bonus. Check back next month for our world-exclusive, in-depth preview when we talk to the team about their plans for the game.

Bit of a difference of opinion going on here.

Our tip for one of the Games Of The Year.

Great visuals in what we expect to be a great game.

DIABLO II: LORDS OF DESTRUCTION

> **66**New interactive environments are promised, with siege towers and fortified battlements hopefully lending an element of strategy to the proceedings**99**

⊕ **Publisher** Sierra • **ETA** June • **Website** www.blizzard.com/diablo2exp

Opinion is divided as to the merits of *Diablo II* in the *ZONE* office, but it has its admirers and has sold well despite the fact that *Diablo II*, as cynics would have it, is basically *Diablo 1* with a few new features. The new expansion features a whole new act set in the Barbarian Homelands, so

single-player *DII* buffs will have plenty to keep them occupied for a few days at least. Far more interesting however, is the introduction of two new classes, the Assassin and the Druid. The *DII* online multiplayer community will surely be very pleased with this news, as they will have two completely new character classes to play the game with

online. This compares favourably with the measly one class promised in the new *EverQuest* expansion when it comes out later this year, though in fairness, *EverQuest*'s vastly superior graphics (and gameplay) will always tip the balance in Verant's favour. New interactive environments are also promised, with siege towers and fortified battlements hopefully lending an element of strategy to the proceedings. The usual array of new monsters, weapons, armour and items will also be on show, and we expect *DII*

fans will rush out and buy this as soon as it hits the streets. Whether it will convert new devotees to the *Diablo* series however, remains to be seen.

Same old, but the new classes should add to the multiplayer side of things.

The new druid class struts his stuff.
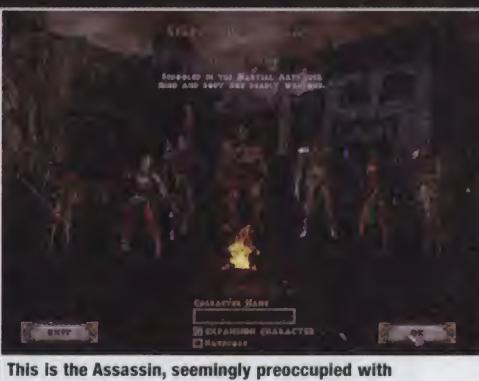
This is the Assassin, seemingly preoccupied with assassinating something, as you would expect.

Two new classes and interactive environments.

As with *BGII*, the graphics in *Bhaal* are highly detailed.

The expansion will keep you occupied for up to 50 hours, if you're a bit crap.

Bloody weather!

BALDUR'S GATE II: THE THRONE OF BHAAL

⭐ **Publisher** Interplay • **ETA** June • **Website** www.blackisle.com

While *Baldur's Gate II* was not particularly ground-breaking in terms of originality (we had seen it all before in the first *Baldur's Gate*) it was an excellent upgrade for what is still one of the best RPGs currently available on PC and an immensely entertaining game in its own right. The *BG* experience is about to be further enhanced with *The Throne Of Bhaal*, an expansion pack that has many new features and brings the ongoing Bhaal tale, which started in the original game, to a conclusion. *BGII* veterans will no doubt be pleased to note the experience cap has been raised to a staggering eight million points, and you can import your characters from *BGII* and take them to high levels (you can take your character as high as level 40, depending on class). With higher levels come better skills and abilities, and for magic users it means there will be many new spells available, in addition to better versions of their existing spells. There will also be new

More *Baldur's Gate II*. That can only be good news.

The usual array of new items and opponents adorn Black Isle's latest.

areas to explore in the form of Watchers Keep, which is available for play in *BGII* itself, and brand new game maps in the country of Tethyr, which you can access once you have played *Shadows Of Amn* to its conclusion. Also included in the expansion is a new character class called the Wild Mage, which gives players access to a very different kind of magic user. Wild Mages can cast both defensive and offensive magic, though be warned that wild magic is highly unpredictable. It was certainly unpredictable in the test version we played, but hey, that's probably us just being crap. *Throne Of Bhaal* is looking promising indeed at this point – look out for a full review in an issue of *ZONE* coming your way soon.

Man in room ponders life's complexities.

From the creators of *Planescape: Torment.* How can it fail?

TORN uses *Fallout's* complex skill system for character development.

TORN

⭐ **Publisher** Interplay **ETA** winter • **Website** www.blackisle.com

Well it's difficult if not impossible not to have high expectations for this one. *TORN* is currently in development by the team who created both *Fallout 1* and *2* and *Planescape: Torment,* which for many people still ranks as one the greatest RPGs ever made. Depth of storyline and intense character interaction are promised when *TORN* reaches completion later this year, and character development is sure to be flexible and challenging given that the game uses a real-time version of the S.P.E.C.I.A.L system used in the *Fallout* series. There are no character classes as such in the game: players are instead encouraged to customise their character as they see fit. You decide whether to concentrate on magic or melee, distributing skill points to the relevant areas and assigning perks to characters to give them special abilities in one area or the other. Players start the game alone, but as is now almost customary with these games, they will meet characters along the way that they can invite into their party. Up to five NPCs can accompany the player on their journey through *TORN*, and while the game sacrifices *Fallout's* cyberpunk tendencies in favour of all-out beardiness, there are features we are confident will attract casual players. For example, the real-time combat is a definite plus, and the ability to cast spells and use abilities infinitely providing you have mana is much more attractive to casual role-players than having to memorise your spells and then sleep all night to get them back when they run out. We can only hope *TORN* carries the same depth and effortlessly supreme storytelling displayed in *Planescape: Torment*. You can be sure yours truly will be first in the queue to review it.

POOL OF RADIANCE: RUINS OF MYTH DRANNOR

⊕ **Publisher** Ubi Soft • **ETA** Xmas 2001 • **Website** www.poolofradiance.com

The original title in this series is so ancient its pulling power as a licence can at best be minimal at this point, since many of today's RPG community will never have heard of the thing. *Pool Of Radiance* was first released way back in 1988, and its huge success spawned many similar games from SSI. At the time, these titles were considered classics, and SSI reigned supreme in all things RPG. Thirteen years later, it is on the verge of releasing the sequel to what is considered by many to be the mother of turn-based RPGs on PC. *Ruins Of Myth Drannor* uses the same Third Edition Dungeons & Dragons rule-set as *Neverwinter Nights*, but unlike *Neverwinter Nights*, there is no real-time mode to speak of. In an apparent nod to the ancient original,

Ruins uses a turn-based system where each party member has their go and then waits for their opponents to do the same. The player will have the option to adjust the length of time it takes for units to take their turn, but the pseudo real-time combat seen in games like *Baldur's Gate* will not be making an appearance in this title. How today's RPG fans who have been reared on a diet of fast-paced action will react to this is anyone's guess, but SSI's decision to go back to basics with this title will at least ensure the combat rounds will require a large degree of strategy if you are to emerge victorious. Up to four player-made characters can be taken into the game, with two party positions left free for NPCs to join as you make your way through the adventure. Or, if you wish, you can replace most of your original party members with NPCs when you realise that the characters you made at the start of the game are completely naff. Could this be the title that brings the RPG crown back to SSI? We don't know. We'll tell you when it comes in for review.

Well, it looks a bit better than the one they put out 13 years ago, which is good.

Sharp character graphics and detailed environments. We like.

"So, are we going to fight something or what?"

WIZARDRY 8

⊕ **Publisher** TBC • **ETA** TBC • **Website** www.wizardry8.com

Another long-running series about to be given a major overhaul is *Wizardry 8*, a more or less typical goblin-based romp but this one has its fair share of oddball characters too. Dracons (a combination of dragons and humans), Felpurrs (cat-people) and Mooks (they look like gremlins to me but I might be wrong) are all playable races in *Wizardry 8*. Developer Sir-Tech, renowned for characters with personality (as seen in its *Jagged Alliance* titles) seem determined to brush aside the serious side of RPGs and produce a game that is simple and

fun to play without drowning the player in a myriad of stats and tables. This is commendable of course, and on the evidence of what we've seen they seem to be on target for the most part. Our only doubt at this stage about *Wizardry 8* is that the graphical style appears to be a little dated alongside some of the other titles featured here, but that could all change while the game is still in development. It doesn't help that Sir-Tech has yet to find a publisher for its game, but we have no doubts that with such a strong licence on offer, one of the big boys will step in and fund the game to its completion.

The game without a developer. Or monsters, by the looks of things.

Who lives in a room like this?

The graphics look a little dated, but there's still a long way to go.
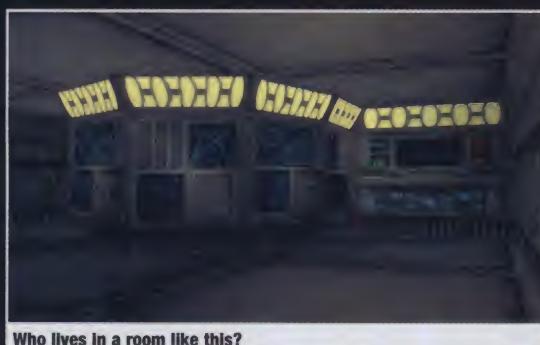
"It doesn't help that Sir-Tech has yet to find a publisher for the game, but we have no doubts that with such a strong licence on offer, one of the big boys will step in and fund the game to its completion"

ARCANUM:
OF STEAMWORKS & MAGICK OBSCURA

⊕ **Publisher** Sierra • **ETA** Sept • **Web** www.sierrastudios.com/games/arcanum/

This is a curious one indeed. In development by Troika, founded by three members of the original *Fallout* team, *Arcanum* is a bizarre mix of high fantasy and cyberpunk technology. In stark contrast to *Wizardry 8*, *Arcanum* will have a

> **❝With more than 300 unique characters and 280 different monster types, *Arcanum* is destined to avoid the often repetitive gameplay in RPGs❞**

bewildering amount of stats and skill-types, which the player can utilise to customise their characters and effectively make any type of character class imaginable. This game is clearly not for beginners, but with the huge market for original RPGs created in part by *Baldur's Gate* and further

reinforced by *Planescape: Torment*, Troika has almost surely got a big hit on its hands with what looks to be an RPG of extraordinary depth. It's fair to say that of all the games featured here, this one has the most unique approach to an established genre. Pistol-shooting and spell-casting co-exist uneasily in a world that has only just begun to reap the benefits of the mechanical age. And while the people of Arcanum tinker happily with light bulbs and guns, the mages of the world are ill at ease and it doesn't take a genius to figure out what's going to happen next: all-out war. Graphically *Arcanum* is perhaps a little reminiscent of the *Fallout* series, but the environments boast a much higher level of detail than any of the *Fallout*

games, and the in-game characters are both imaginative and unique. Troika has wisely taken the cue of its main rivals by offering both real-time and

It's stats galore in Arcanum: Of Steamworks And Magick Obscura.

Arcanum: *one of our tips for the top spot.*

turn-based combat options. And with more than 300 unique characters and 280 different monster types, *Arcanum* is destined to avoid the often repetitive gameplay in RPGs that present the player with slightly altered versions of the same opponents everywhere they go. The proof is obviously to be found somewhere in the pudding, but we can say that *Arcanum* is looking great at this point, and we can only hope it lives up to expectations when it arrives for review in September.

ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

You have to admit... it looks absolutely stunning.

With the graphics looking so good, all Bethesda has to do is stick a half-decent game in there.

Players will be able to create their own *Morrowind* scenarios with the construction kit.

⊕ **Publisher** Bethesda • **ETA** September • **Website** www.morrowind.com

The third official chapter in the *Elder Scrolls* series will be with us later this year, and while *Daggerfall* (the second chapter in the series) may have been graphically challenged to a large degree, *Morrowind* is shaping up to be one of the best-looking RPGs currently in development – as the screenshots on this page attest. *Morrowind* is far more open-ended than many of the other titles here, a trait that in some people's eyes was the only good thing about *Daggerfall* (OK, in *my* eyes then). But perhaps the most interesting feature of *Morrowind* is its ability to change the gameworld completely with the aid of the TES construction set. Bethesda is planning to release the construction set used to build *Morrowind* with the game when it ships. This will enable players to create or import plug-ins that contain new items, characters and dungeons. This will surely extend the life span of the game to a large degree, which is just as well since Bethesda is including no multiplayer or online features with the game whatsoever. This in itself should not

be a drawback if the single-player game lives up to expectations. What makes *Morrowind* such an enticing prospect however – apart from the graphics of course – is the detail that has gone into both the story and physics of the world. Physics, not in terms of how you'll see the game played out, but in the rules that govern how the game is played. Rather than relying on generic AD&D rules, Bethesda has created over the course of many years a whole universe that could well, if put on paper, be up there with Dungeons & Dragons itself. Of course like all good role-playing games, the cogs and wheels of rolling computer dice should be kept in the background. In many respects *Morrowind* should look and feel more like a fantasy world version of *Deux Ex* than a 3D *Baldur's Gate*, with the game played entirely in the first person. The north west of Tamriel, where *Morrowind* is set, is said to be 50 times the size of Redguard, comprising more than 30 cities and towns, as well as the odd dungeon. It's a big place and sure to be a big game too.

DUNGEON SIEGE

⭐ **Publisher** Microsoft • **ETA** Oct • **Website** www.gaspoweredgames.com

Dungeon Siege lays its cards on the table straight away as an unashamedly action-oriented RPG with the emphasis on combat above almost all else. The game is designed from the ground up to be as user-friendly and simple to pick up and play as possible, and most of your time in the game is likely to be spent slaying hordes of monsters, as opposed to pondering two million different stats and where you should allocate your points. That's not to say it lacks depth – in fact, it has one of the most sophisticated and flexible character development systems we've seen. Rather than enforce class restrictions on the player, in *Dungeon Siege* any character can cast any spell and use any weapon. Repeated use of a particular spell or weapon will

increase the character's skill, which means you can effectively mould your characters into any type of magic user or melee type you wish. Developer Gaspowered Games is also making big noises about the engine, which powers *Dungeon Siege*. The *Siege* engine allows for a continuous gameworld in which you can go from one gameworld to another without seeing a single loading screen. Again, this kind of uninterrupted gameplay shows the team's dedication to creating an action-packed gaming experience, and even such formalities as plot are explained thus: "Take the hero and discover why hordes of monsters have suddenly started invading the surrounding local communities". Right, we'll be sure to do that then. Multiplay enthusiasts are catered for in the form of a co-operative campaign in which you play through the single-player game with the aid of other people, and more traditional head-to-head battles, such as Capture The Flag. *Dungeon Siege* then, shows enormous potential. Oh, and it looks gorgeous too.

Beautiful graphics and non-stop action: a winning combination if ever there was one.

Dungeon Siege promises to be action-packed from start to finish.

Dungeon Siege: simplicity over complexity.

This is some people disagreeing on a particular point with some other people.

Tactical plays make real-time combat easier to control, allegedly.

Throne Of Darkness uses the world of Japanese mythology.

Is this the first ever RPG to feature samurai? We think so.

THRONE OF DARKNESS

⭐ **Publisher** Sierra • **ETA** summer 2001 • **Website** www.clickent.com

Despite sounding decidedly beardy, *Throne Of Darkness* is actually an action-oriented RPG with characters and environments based on Japanese mythology. Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to guide seven samurai in their quest to overthrow the terrible evil that has

somewhat predictably beset their kingdom. The development team is making a bit of a ballyhoo about its "innovative multi-character control interface". Using this interface you can give simultaneous commands to up to four characters through a series of tactical plays. Each 'play' will work to the individual strengths of the

samurai, so archers will fall back and shower things with arrows, while melee types wade in and hit things very hard on the head. It sounds a bit like American football, except without the Americans, or the football. This seems intriguing and may go some way to alleviating the real-time gameplay

problem in RPGs, as you will have a much better chance of keeping up with the action if you can command four characters at once. It sounds great in theory, but will it work in practice? We haven't a clue, but as always we'll let you know when it arrives in the *ZONE* office for a damn good testing later in the year. 🖳

"If you look to your left, you'll see Saturn…"

Orange sky at night, Klingon's delight.

Just when you thought it was safe...
STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE –
DOMINION WARS

"Take that, you rotter."

"The humanity…"
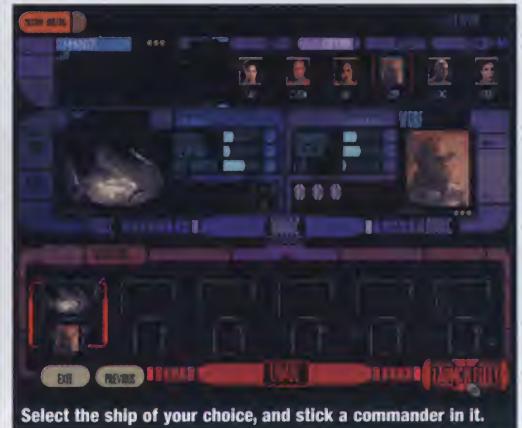
Select the ship of your choice, and stick a commander in it.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Gizmo Games
PUBLISHER PAN Interactive
WEBSITE www.gizmogames.com
OUT June 22 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- It's *Star Trek*
- It's *Deep Space 9*
- Four intergalactic races
- Exclusive ship designs

CV

GIZMO GAMES

Crazy name, crazy guys…

2001 *Dominion Wars* is the first game Gizmo has released, unless anyone knows any different

"I assume you are joking," said *Steve Hill* when we called him. Evidently, we weren't

Star Trek. Two words that hang over the PC games industry like so much bad air. If we had a quid for every substandard *Star Trek* game that washed up on these shores, we'd probably be able to send out for pizzas, and maybe even have some change left over. If we had another quid for every anal buffoon who writes in with some pedantic comment about misrepresentation of phasers or incorrectly used apostrophes, we'd probably be able to throw in a few beers as well. So listen up Trekkies, Trekkoids, whatever you call yourselves: get a grip, get a shave, and take a bath.

It may have been implied within these pages that *Star Trek* is not my favourite thing, and the occasional poorly written piece of hate mail would appear to add credence to this theory. The truth is, if there's absolutely nothing else on, I might entertain watching the original series, although the kitsch/nostalgic appeal

still wears thin over the course of an entire episode. As for the new stuff, I would scarcely know where to start. I could probably pick out a Klingon from a line-up, and I believe the actor Patrick Stewart is involved somewhere. As for your *Next Generations*, *Voyagers* and *Deep Space Nines*, it's all a bit of a mystery. In fact, the closest I get to any of that nonsense is flicking through a copy of *PC ZONE*, which tragically appears to be transforming itself into a thinly veiled *Star Trek* tribute magazine. I'm lying of course. I love *Star Trek*.

TREK OFF

Set within a faithfully replicated *Deep Space Nine* universe (which some aficionados might concede is the worst series), *Dominion Wars* ambitiously describes itself as a real-time space combat strategy. Having played a pre-beta version of the final game, we can confirm that it is real-time, there is a great deal of space combat, and a degree of strategy is required. However, by space combat,

don't expect to leap into the cockpit of a craft and start giving your joystick a battering. It's essentially a strategy game set in space, and if we wanted to pigeonhole it, we could uncomfortably describe it as *Homeworld* in *Deep Space Nine* trousers, which it isn't, since resource-management is kept to keeping your crew alive rather that spending an age boring through rocks… Extensive space battles are the order of the day then, and before entering into the fray, you can select your fleet and appoint commanders to each ship as well as crew and weaponry. And, hey, it's just like on the telly. The cast and crew are all in there, for what it's worth, and, along with more than 20 different classes of starships, including several original, never-before-seen designs created exclusively for the game. Officially sanctioned by Paramount, these include the Jem'Hader Strike Cruiser, the Kilingon K'Vort Cha', and the Cardassian Hutet Warship classes.

SIX OF ONE

Up to six ships can be commanded simultaneously, and the viewpoint can be switched between them or panned out to give a more strategic overview.

Should have packed a fire extinguisher.

> **"At first look, it's a fairly in-depth approach, and is shaping up to be a game for the hardcore *Star Trek* strategist"**

Now that's really torn it.

Explosive action from the game they're all calling *Dominion Wars*.

Check out shield boy.

Hit me with those laser beams.

The action takes place in the same time period as the final two seasons of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, when the Dominion War pitted an alliance of the Federation and Klingons against the Cardassians and invading Dominion fleets in a prolonged and costly battle for control of the Alpha Quadrant. But you already knew that, didn't you?

Each ship is programmed with artificial intelligence and is fine-tuned to behave appropriately for its size, capabilities and origin. Therefore Klingon ships fight to the bitter end, avoiding the dishonour of defeat and capture at all cost. Federation ships exhibit the technological prowess of Federation science and the renowned skill of Starfleet's finest officers, Cardassian ships are ruthless and cunning, and Dominion ships cold and calculatingly brutal. As a last resort the Jem'Hadar fighters will even ram their opponents in a suicidal manoeuvre.

All of this takes place in front of your eyes, replete with rather impressive moving pictures, and all the *Star Trek* sound effects, voices and music any fan could possibly want. Resources can be switched from one ship to another, and they can each be assigned different tasks, such as guarding a fellow ship, circling the enemy, or attacking a base, with a number of objectives given for each mission. At first look, it's a fairly in-depth approach, and it's shaping up to be a game for the hardcore *Star Trek* strategist. If you can bear the tension, we'll be bringing you an in-depth review any time soon, maybe even as early as next issue. That would be nice. ◼

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Richie Shoemaker thinks it's time for a change

Space sims, 3D real-time strategy, first-person shooters, point-and-click adventures, online Top Trumps rubbish and turn-based boredom – all genres done to death over the years through dozens of *Star Trek* games, most, until recently, utter toss. *Star Trek*, like *Star Wars*, is of course better suited to some genres than others and in the realm of space strategy, a genre *Dominion Wars* occupies alongside the similar *Starfleet Command*, there seem to be few equals.

But where is *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine – The Sims*? Surely a game where you start out in the crew quarters, and go to work in Quark's bar and try and chat up tri-breasted ladies would be a winner. Reviewed in this very issue is *Startopia* (p70), a game that with *DS9*'s licence and back story could have been a Trekkies dream come true. Better still *Star Trek: Deep Throat Nine*, which my editor I'm sure would prefer I didn't expand on, but you get my drift. There are some great ideas out there and *Star Trek* games still seem content to clone just the popular ones, like *Quake* and *Command & Conquer*, without playing to the strengths of the *Star Trek* universe itself, such as exploration and discovery.

And while I'm at it, can someone start work on that *Star Trek Vs Star Wars* game we're all waiting for.

"We don't like your sort around here"

"Let's go and kick in the guy in the white helmet"

A Shoemaker Hill Fantasy Production.

Will it be dead good or a dead loss?

The dead must die? That's a paradox you daft twat.

So that's what happened to Charlie Brooker.

A bit of Mr Muscle wouldn't go astray on those walls.

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Novalogic
PUBLISHER Novalogic
WEBSITE www.necrocide.com
OUT Summer 2001

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

○ It's not a flight sim
○ Or a war game
○ It's a bit gothic
○ Artwork by some bloke

NECROCIDE:
THE DEAD MUST DIE

He's been accused of some sick things, but *Steve Hill* swears he's not a corpse fiddler

Don't bother looking in your dictionaries, because it's not in there. If it were, it would lurk furtively between necrobiosis (the death of cells) and necrolatry (worship of the dead), a couple of entries ahead of necromancy (conjuring up the dead) and necrophilia (rutting on their fetid corpses). There's no such word then, although if there were, simple linguistics suggest that it would mean death of the dead, as hinted at in the game's subtitle. Well, aren't they clever? About as clever as the little-known South Carolina speed metal band of the same name. Should it ever come to court, we imagine Novalogic's financial clout would carry the day.

Loosely billed as a gothic first-person shooter, *Necrocide* represents something of a departure for the Novalogic, traditionally associated with worthy flight sims and military shenanigans. One such example provides the engine here, as *Necrocide* utilises the innards of *Delta Force: Land Warrior*, albeit with white make-up, lace gloves and skintight kecks. Choosing between The Sisters Of Mercy and Fields Of The Nephilim, the idea is to vanquish your rival goth band by throwing flour into their eyes and breaking their nails.

UNDEAD, UNDEAD, UNDEAD...

Of course it isn't, although any opportunity to take the piss out of goths shouldn't be passed up. What's

> **"An arsenal of weapons is promised, in addition to all manner of vampiric powers. Whatever that means"**

actually happened is that four powerful vampires have discovered a way to survive without guzzling human blood. Now that might sound like a good thing, but unfortunately they've only gone and raised the dead, which loosely covers necromancers, zombies, demons, werewolves and hellhounds. Maybe even a couple of succubi.

However, the fate of the world is in good hands in the shape of the game's heroine (Rhianna Pratchett), who is guided by her 500-year-old mentor (Chris Anderson). Between them, they've mustered up some undead-repelling techniques, and you'll be able to go at them with a variety of stylised weapons. The game is described as a close- to mid-range shooter, so don't go expecting any sniper rifles, although an arsenal of traditional and supernatural weapons is promised, in addition to all manner of vampiric powers. Whatever that means.

As for scenery, the five realms will encompass a combination of large, complex interiors and vast outdoor environments, pushing the *Land Warrior* engine to its limits. The services of some art bod have also been secured, with the so-called Brom providing the game's visual inspiration. Something of a veteran of the macabre, his work has previously appeared in *Doom II* and *Heretic*, collectable card games such as the Dark Age series, and role-playing games, including (ahem) Dungeons And Dragons. Brom also designed the movie poster for Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow* and is responsible for some of the book covers of fantasy writer Michael Moorcock. We bet he's a big hit with the ladies. That's your *Necrocide* then. All the fun of the nefarious.

STAR TREK ARMADA II

Another sequel is on its way. *Mark Hill* finds out if it's more than just Star Trekking-by-numbers

THE DETAILS

DEVELOPER Mad Doc
PUBLISHER Activision
WEBSITE www.activision.com
OUT End of year

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL

- Fight as the Borg against Species 8472
- New 3D tactical mode
- Formations add more tactical options
- Trading elements

You know times are getting desperate when distinctly average games that have enjoyed a modicum of success start getting sequels simply on the strength of their licences. The press release that accompanies *Armada II* states that the original game was 'the best-selling *Star Trek* RTS ever', which is funny considering its only competition is the monstrous *New Worlds*. To be fair, *Armada* was an entertaining, if somewhat simplistic, take on the real-time strategy genre, wrapped up in an excellent storyline.

It was heavily criticised for being set in space and yet not having any 3D depth. Not coincidentally, the main innovation for the sequel is a tactical view mode, which allows you to see and control the battles in fully rotatable and zoomable 3D, giving orders and setting formations. It won't exactly turn it into *Shogun* in space,

> **"The main innovation for the sequel is a tactical view mode, which allows you to see and control the battles in fully rotable 3D"**

but it does add another layer to the gameplay. Despite this 3D view, *Armada II* doesn't try to emulate *Homeworld*. The first *Armada* appealed to a very specific section of the gaming population: *Trek* fans who didn't want their strategy games too complicated. Producer Doug Pearson makes it clear that they don't intend to alienate those people by making things too complex in the sequel. "*Homeworld* is a great game, but it

didn't have mass appeal because a lot of people found the controls hard and had problems with 3D space and orientation. We don't force people to use the camera, we just give them the option. Nothing can be done in the 3D tactical view that can't be done exactly the same in the normal top-down view."

WARPED

To make movement easier in the much-enlarged maps – now twice as deep and twice as large – ships can warp, which basically means they can move faster and become elongated and elastic. However, you won't be able to warp near a planet.

The other main change is the resource management. Instead of mining Dilithium clusters, you have to capture planets to mine them and get additional crew. "We have also introduced a similar trading system to *Age Of Empires*, where you can trade excess goods to purchase other goods," adds Doug. "For that purpose we've brought in the Ferengi, so you can trade with them, with each map having its own market values for different goods."

The structure is also slightly different this time, with three long campaigns made up of nine missions each, as opposed to the five mini-campaigns of the original. Newbies will be able to learn the ropes through three extra training missions. Old hands will be pleased to know that the story follows directly from *Armada*, at a time when the Federation is reforming its forces after the struggle against the Borg.

Developer Mad Doc is a newcomer to the scene, but is made up of members of the in-house Activision team that created the first *Armada*, and ex-members of Looking Glass who worked on *Thief I* and *II* and *System Shock II*. That's a good enough reason to expect *Armada II* to be a solid game, but we'll have to wait and see if it can convince the RTS masses. **PCZ**

The new formations should make battles a lot more tactical.
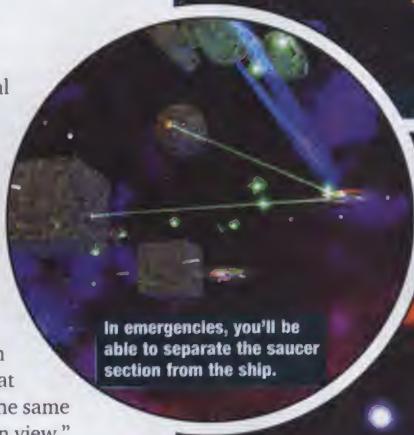
In emergencies, you'll be able to separate the saucer section from the ship.

Explosions are more spectacular in *Armada II* and you'll be able to see whole chunks of ships blown off.

There are loads of new multiplayer options.

You can bombard enemy planets, destroying their defences and cities, before eventually taking them over.

Oi!... GONZO! WHAT'S

Mark Hill ventured to Madrid to meet the creator of *Commandos* and to catch a glimpse of the sequel in action

Spain is probably the last place you'd expect to find a World War II classic. After all, during the conflict, the country was recovering from the ravages of a Civil War that had left the nation physically and spiritually broken, where brother had slain brother and neighbours condemned lifelong friends to the firing squad. And while Franco's dictatorship had friendly relations with Hitler, Spain never became personally involved in the war. Gonzo Suarez, the project head and main visionary behind *Commandos*, pointed out to me that Spain benefited greatly during WWII, perhaps referring as much to the success of the first game as to the consequences of this being a neutral country in such a devastating war.

The original *Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines* was a huge sleeper hit – to borrow a Hollywood term – in 1998 that surprised everyone by sitting at the top of the charts for 15 weeks in the UK and selling consistently throughout Europe. What makes it more extraordinary is that it was an extremely difficult game aimed at hardcore strategists that somehow managed to cross over to the average gamer. "There was hardly any promotion and we were aiming to sell around 15,000 copies at most," says Gonzo, who was as surprised at the

game's massive success (it sold closer to 1.5 million) as anyone. "I think the main reason was just word of mouth. People bought it not really knowing what to expect, became completely addicted and started telling all their friends about it. That gives a game a longevity that all the adverts in the world can't buy." But it's not just a small group of Spanish friends who couldn't stop talking about it, the game was a true international success, even in places you wouldn't expect shooting German soldiers to be all that popular. "In Germany it flew off the shelves, it stayed at number one for 16 weeks. They really like their strategy games hard and thorough over there, although when the German press first saw it they looked so serious and tight-lipped I was convinced they hated it.

> **Shooting Nazis has always been acceptable, but you can't get away from the fact that there's a massive entertainment industry built around a huge atrocity**

But when the reviews came out it was clear they loved it."

BOXING CLEVER

It's been a long journey for Gonzo though, who started out working in advertising and cinema 24 years ago, up until the time a Spectrum landed on his lap in 1983. "It was little more

than a calculator with memory, but I was fascinated and played around with it until I got into the games industry in '84 with Opera Soft. I made about six games with them and went independent in 1990, around the time the industry fell apart in this country." It was at that time when a publisher called Erbe brought down its prices and managed to bring the industry down with them. According to Gonzo, the consequences of that crash can still be felt today, and it was only in 1996 that he was able to start work on *Commandos*. But even then it was an uphill struggle. "It's not easy to make a game in Spain. Most of the talent has

gone abroad and there's very little investment, so it's quite hard. There's only really three big teams in this country and, after 17 years, I'm practically the grandfather of the industry. Most of the people who were working when I started out all retired in the early '90s. One of the toughest things making this game was to build a

good enough team and make sure we brought all the best people. There are people who are great programmers, but have no experience making computer games, so you have to train them up. But because there's only three teams, at least what little talent there is isn't completely diluted."

But Gonzo is nothing if not tough. His heavy build and strong features go hand-in-hand with the fact that he used to be a boxer. "I was never a professional boxer, I was only an amateur. I love contact sport. You can never foresee what's going to happen and you can only work with what's in front of you. That gives your life a more vital rhythm." That vitality is apparent during the presentation held in a luxurious Madrid hotel. Gonzo doesn't speak English, so he stands behind Jon

There are ten different environments, from the South China Sea to Iceland and India.

Night missions give you the cover of darkness.

YOUR GAME?
COMMANDOS 2

PROFILE

GONZO SUAREZ
A man who knows how to concentrate

Name Gonzalo Suarez

Developer Pyro Studios

Position Project head on *Commandos 2*

Age 37

Fave game *StarCraft*

Also worked on A number of Spanish games during the '80s – *Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines*, *Commandos: Beyond The Call Of Duty*

You can still create a window to follow each of your men.

You can rotate the camera 360 degrees and zoom in and out to your heart's content.

You can ride these elephants as if they were vehicles.

The enemy AI is much sharper than it was before.

In some missions you can get Whiskey the dog to fetch things and carry grenades to the enemy.

Beltran – the talented lead programmer – telling him what to do. He is a natural leader and strides through the press room like a general briefing foreign troops. He also seems a little nervous, and his eyes twinkle while Jon translates everything he says. He looks like an excited father as he shows off the myriad of details the game possesses and manages to stun even the most cynical of journalists present.

Commandos 2 is just what a sequel should be. It takes the idea of the

maps of the missions, including a full replica of the Eiffel Tower and a stunning recreation of Colditz.

Later I asked him how they managed to capture so much detail and whether they had the chance to visit all the locations in the game. "Well, although we had a much bigger budget this time round we still couldn't move around that much," he says. "We visited the most accessible places, like Paris. We did get to see Japan, but that was only because

> **❝I like people who take a chance and risk their reputation on something original. You can't live in the shadow of your successes❞**
>
> **GONZALO SUAREZ, PROJECT HEAD ON** *COMMANDOS 2*

original and catapults it to a whole new level. Gonzo shows us the thief climbing walls, peeking through windows, hiding under beds and stealing from Nazi soldiers. He shows us the commando, swinging from cables and diving underwater among schools of fish. He shows us the sniper aiming from a window inside a building, soldiers in the street and officers sitting in a room in another building. He shows us all the vehicles you can drive and the massive, detailed

there was a conference there. Wherever we could, we took digital photographs, but most of the research was done back in the office. We have about 40 square metres of World War II books, so we were very well informed. And, of course, whenever you need to find out a niggly little detail, there's always the Internet."

KILLING NAZIS
One thing that Gonzo is quite keen to make clear from the start is that

Commandos 2 is nowhere near as difficult as the first game, which was never designed with mass appeal in mind. The new game has three difficulty settings, so die-hard fans of the original's near-impossible gameplay will still be able to play in that style, while most of us switch to an enjoyable challenge. That isn't to say that playing on the lowest setting is a breeze. "The first time you come to the game even the easiest setting is difficult," explains Gonzo. "You might even feel a bit lost and wonder how to approach it, but this only lasts 20-25 minutes, and you soon get the hang of it. Once you do you'll want to play on the medium difficulty setting at least. Someone who's just spent the best part of £40 on your game is usually willing to spend that time learning. Not every game has to be pick up and play."

I tried out the first mission, and can confirm that even the easiest setting is quite a challenge. It's also incredibly addictive and involving. This is the kind of difficulty that kept me glued to *Hidden & Dangerous*, and I spent the better part of an afternoon playing it over and over until I managed to finish it. You'll be happy to know that you can now save at any stage too, so the nerve-wracking frustration we all

experienced with *Behind Enemy Lines* should be a thing of the past. This game is clearly geared to a much wider audience. And there are few subjects able to command as much attention as World War II.

Shooting Nazis has always been acceptable, but you can't get away from the fact that there's a massive entertainment industry built around one of the biggest atrocities in human

CV

PYRO STUDIOS

Pyro was set up in 1996 and has since put Spanish games back on the world map

1998	With 1.5 million copies sold, *Commandos: Behind Enemy Lines* came out of nowhere.
1999	Expansion pack for the original game – *Commandos: Beyond The Call Of Duty*
2001	Better than the original, *Commandos 2* should be an even a bigger success.
01-02	*Heart Of Stone* and *Praetorians*: Currently in production, the first is a graphical adventure while the second is an historical RTS.

history. If you think about it, *Star Wars* is crammed with atrocities and is considered apt children's viewing. The Empire wipes out whole worlds, killing millions of people. And what about the storm troopers that our heroes so merrily blast away? How many of them are young men of Luke's age who don't really want to be there? Of course, the evil Empire is closely based on the Third Reich. I asked Gonzo why he thought people are fascinated by such a horrific war.

"The horror doesn't clash with the fascination. All wars are horrid, but when a human being is put in such an extreme situation, he is in touch with himself in a way that most people never experience. That is what fascinates people. *Saving Private Ryan*, despite the rubbish beginning and ending (referring to the modern-day flag-waving and gushing sentimentality of the old man visiting the graves with his family) really shows you both the horror and the fascination of the war. Another reason it's such an attractive period is that suddenly our western civilisation couldn't understand how, being so developed culturally and socially, something like this could happen. It's like a trauma that has affected our whole society."

He also reminds us that this was the first great war to be properly documented in all its aspects. "We've seen it on film, not just in cinema but in documentaries and newsreels made at the time. Then there are all the photographs, the books written by experts and survivors. This is a good situation when you're making a game, as you don't have to worry about introducing the player into a world, and you can take advantage of all that general knowledge to establish a believable context for the gameplay."

ADVENTURE, DEPTH AND REPLAYABILITY

Commandos 2 really tries to capture that sense of adventure you get in great war films like *The Great Escape* and *The Dirty Dozen*. In fact, the unfinished code used for the presentation gives it all away in the names of the levels. There was a Saving Private Ryan mission, an Escape From Colditz and a Bridge Over The River Kwai to name a few. "That is very much the spirit that *Commandos* tries to recreate, that epic and heroic feel. Another thing it tries to do is bring to mind those detailed models you can't play with because they're made of lead. When you bring those two things together, you start to get a sense of what *Commandos* is all about. The first game was more of an extremely hard puzzle, while this one looks more to the grand adventures of those films."

Gonzo refuses to be drawn specifically on which films he has borrowed from, but he does explain that the Invasion mode is heavily based on *Saving Private Ryan*. In this mode you are given command of a group of soldiers outside your core of characters, which you can give orders to, but can't directly control. You can tell them to cover a certain area, lie down and wait and effectively set up ambushes. "It's that bit where they're waiting in the half-destroyed village for the arrival of the Germans and lay a trap for them, I really wanted to put that in the game. I'm only sorry we won't have time to do some sort of versus mode based on that, where one player could hold the village while another one tries to invade it."

After taking a chance with the first one (several other publishers turned it down), Eidos is keen to turn this into a blockbuster title. The budget is around the $7 million mark and the concept is epic and ambitious. But were Pyro under any pressure to produce a sequel or did Gonzo really want to do it? His answer is unequivocal. "This is something I really wanted to do, although I don't want to do a third one, which I'm sure there'll be pressure to do. I've already spent five years doing *Commandos* and I'm ready to move on to something different. I love my job but, after 17 years, I'm also tired of it, so I only want to work on new things that really excite me. I've no desire to work for two and a half years on a title that doesn't interest me. I wouldn't be capable of doing a job just for the money. It's not that I don't like money, but I don't want to work on shit. You should only work on things you love, that are worthwhile. Even if you fail, it's better to fail doing something you want than have success with something you don't."

This is a man who wants to make a difference to the games world. He's a storyteller like Warren Spector and Peter Molyneux, a man Gonzo has a lot of admiration for. "He's not afraid to try something completely new. *Black & White* seems like a strange game, combining god games with strategy and Tamagotchi-type creatures, but at least it's new. And I like people who take a chance and risk their reputation on something original. You can't live in the shadow of your successes. But I still want my next game to have the same sense of depth as *Commandos* and I want it to be replayable, like *StarCraft* or *Diablo*. That's the secret of a great game: depth and replayability. It should have a coherent and well-developed world you can play in, even if it isn't realistic. Because you're only ever as good as your last game or, if you're very lucky, your game before last." With *Commandos 2* shaping up to be one of the more interesting propositions this year, there's no danger of Gonzo Suarez being forgotten just yet.

The multiplayer mode allows up to eight people to play the game co-operatively.
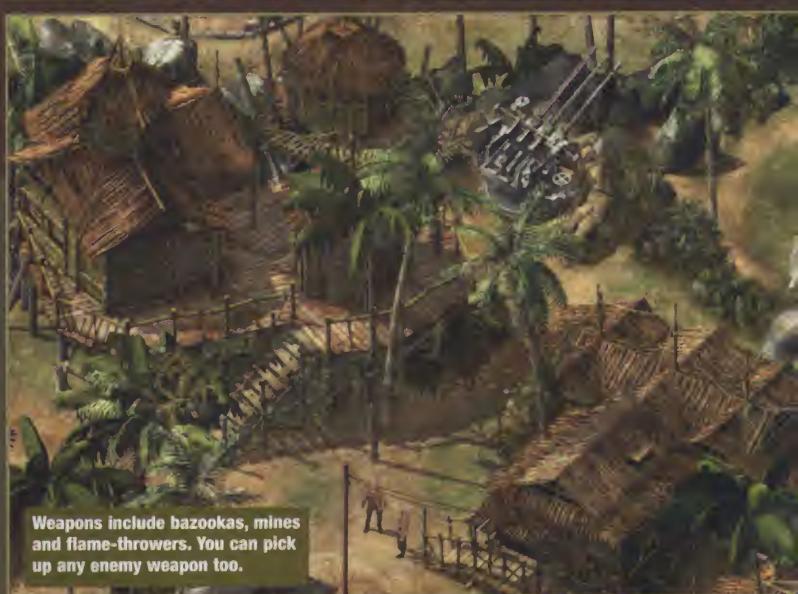
Weapons include bazookas, mines and flame-throwers. You can pick up any enemy weapon too.

OPERATION JAPAN

Commandos 2... coming to a console near you...

If you're worried the PC game has been dumbed down so it can be ported to the PS2 and Dreamcast, you shouldn't be. The console version is very different, giving you direct control over the characters in a *Metal Gear Solid*-style of gameplay. It looks good, but is more about action than strategy. Gonzo is hoping to make it into the Japanese market as well. "I have a great respect and admiration for the Japanese. *Commandos 2* is intended to be a big super-production, which is something the Japanese are very good at. I want to create something that takes your breath away and then makes you want to play it all again. That is something the Japanese do." But he admits it won't be easy. "The Japanese can be very touchy, and in *Commandos 2*, the Japanese are your enemy. The Germans took it well, but I'm not sure what the Japanese will make of it."

Big in Japan. Maybe, just maybe.

PCZONE REVIEWS

Don't spend a single penny until you've checked out the *ZONE* reviews first – we'll tell you which games you've just got to buy and which to avoid

MISSION STATEMENT

We're on this planet to serve you. You need to know which games are worth buying, which ones are worth considering for a rainy day, and which ones you should point and laugh at on the shelves. For that reason, *PC ZONE* works a little differently to any other magazine in the UK.

⊗ Our reviewers are the most experienced and talented in the business. We're all massive garners and we don't mince our words. If there are problems in a game, then we'll tell you about them, even if it means falling foul of certain big names in the industry.

⊗ What's more, we will only review finished games, which means that any bugs we see within the game will be reported back to you. On occasions we are forced to review from gold masters, but this still means that what we see is what you get in the final boxed product.

⊗ Occasionally, this means we can't review the multiplayer side of the game at the same time as the single-player review, as the servers aren't up and running. When this happens, we won't fudge the issue and claim that "multiplayer works well", we'll wait until the servers have been running successfully for a month before running a full second review in our Online section.

⊗ We also make sure that we test out the games we review across a variety of different machines and graphics cards. In the office we have access to a whole range of different gaming PCs, from a lowly P233 up to the latest lGHz behemoth. If we spot differences between the minimum specifications and real-life testing then we'll let you know in the review.

⊗ Our scoring system is the most honest in the industry. If a game is average, then we'll give it 50 per cent. If it's not worth knowing then we'll give it the burial it deserves. On the flipside, you won't find many games getting 90 per cent or above, the prerequisite for our Classic award. Since issue 85 (and the introduction of the new scoring system), we've

only given out eight Classics and this proves that a game has to be pretty special to get the award.

⊗ We also make sure that every game is reviewed by an expert in the field, which means that each of our reviews can be placed in context with other games of that genre. You won't see a first-person shooter being reviewed by an RTS fan, and you can be sure that the person reviewing a game has played all the important titles in that particular field.

⊗ Every now and again you might disagree with the treatment we've given a game. That's where our Feedback section comes in. This is where you get to have your say in *PC ZONE*, and where your rumblings are answered by the person who wrote the original review in the magazine.

ALL THE LATEST GAMES REVIEWED & RATED

WHERE TO CALL

Having trouble finding any of the games listed in the reviews section of the magazine? Here are the numbers you need to call:

Acclaim 020 7344 5000 • **Activision** 01895 456700 • **Anco** 01322 292513 • **Blue Byte** (Germany) 49 0 208 450880 • **Codemasters** 01926 814132 • **Cryo** 01926 315552 • **Eidos Interactive** 020 8636 3000 • **Electronic Arts** 01932 450000 • **Empire Interactive** 020 8343 7337 • **Europress** 01625 855000 • **Gremlin Interactive** 0114 263 9900 • **GT Interactive** 020 8222 9700 • **Hasbro Interactive** 020 8569 1234 • **Infogrames** 0161 827 8000 • **Interplay** 020 7551 4222 • **Microids** (France) 00 33 146 01 54 01 • **Microsoft** 0345 002 000 • **Mattel** 01444 246333 • **NovaLogic** 020 7324 8900 • **Rage Software** 0151 237 2200 • **Take 2 Interactive** 01753 854 444 • **THQ** 01483 767656 • **Ubi Soft** 020 8944 9000 • **Zablac** 01626 332233

WHAT DO OUR SCORES MEAN?

90-100% If a game scores 90 or above, it probably means it's quite good. Classics are games that transcend their parts with the sheer quality of the finished product, creating an experience that will leave an indelible mark on your gaming memory. So, not bad then.

PCZONE CLASSIC

80-89% In this category you'll find great games that just fall short of being truly exceptional. From slightly-flawed genius to a perfectly-executed traditional concept, these might not be true Classics – but they're still worth having.

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

70-79% These scores are not necessarily a condemnation to gaming hell - in fact, we consider any game that falls into this category as worth checking out. Not Classic or excellent, just very good.

50-69% In this range you'll find games that go from the just-above-average to the alright-really-honest. They're usually good fun but have a limited long-term appeal. Read the review and find out if it's really what you're after before you decide to part with your cash.

20-49% These games just manage to keep their heads above the excrement, although a title scoring in the 20s is probably pretty poor. You can find a game that plays reasonably in this category, but you've been warned.

0-19% Some games are born pants and some have pantness thrust upon them. These games shouldn't have been released. Avoid at all costs.

PCZONE PANTS

MEET THE TEAM

All *PC ZONE*'s reviewers are experts in their field. We like to give every game that comes in for review the best chance, which is why we give it to a fan of the genre

What is your highest score in *Mr Driller*?

DAVE WOODS
GENRE FPS, RPG, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Mr Driller, QIII Jailbreak*
3450ft

RICHIE SHOEMAKER
GENRE RTS, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Sudden Strike Forever, Operation Flashpoint*
3215ft

MARTIN KORDA
GENRE Strategy, space combat
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Independence War 2, Counter-Strike*
I don't play that muck.

RHIANNA PRATCHETT
GENRE RPG, RTS, adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Black & White, Diablo II (online)*
2320ft

THIS MONTH, WE HAVE MOSTLY BEEN PLAYING...

⊙ **DEPUTY EDITOR** Richie Shoemaker

...Well, you'd think from the review on page 66, that all at *PC ZONE* would be clamouring through bushes and killing Soviet troops in the magnificent *Operation Flashpoint*. But no. The game that has been taking up most of our collective hours is... OK, OK, yes it's *Counter-Strike*. But coming a close second is a game that requires no 3D graphics card, nor a PC that would cost in excess of £2,000. The game that has us all hooked at the moment is *Mr Driller* (p60), a £10 special from Midas Interactive, who contrary to their track record have released a fairly decent conversion of a timeless arcade classic. To coin a phrase, if you only buy 17 games this year, make sure *Mr Driller* is one of them.

Not that *Flashpoint* has been laying idle back at base camp, oh no. While we still rely on *Counter-Strike* for our lunchtime gaming fix, and steal a quick ten minute lungful of *Driller* rather than brave the elements and smoke ourselves into an early grave outside, after work and in the comfort of our own homes *Flashpoint* fills in our evening hours with the morning after spent comparing notes on how we each fared in our Cold War endeavours.

Apart from Martin 'Chicken' Korda that is, who in preferring the coldness of space to the Cold War has been spending his nights gallivanting across the cosmos in *Independence War 2* (p62), avenging deaths and generally saving the universe in much the same way as you might save a plate from smashing on the floor during the washing up.

Which leaves me only to mention the games that arrived in the office unfinished and which we are looking forward to reviewing next issue: Preview code of the *Shogun* expansion, *Battlecruiser Millennium* and *Commandos 2* – all arriving in unassuming brown envelopes with the words 'Preview Code – Do Not Review. Or Else' scrawled across them in black marker pen, (amazingly, as they were written by PR people, on the right side of the disc).

And while we're on the subject of PR people, one called me recently to voice concerns over my little rant regarding *Seriously 'Overpriced' Sam* (see last issue). The first words I heard eminating from the phone were "I'm not talking to you...", to which I replied, "Well who are you talking to then?" Actually I didn't say that at all, but I certainly wish I had.

A CLASS ACT

Certain games deserve to be elevated above and beyond the mass of titles on the shelves. For that reason we've made it hard for a game to receive our coveted Classic award and a score of 90 per cent and above. Each one will have to show originality, take their respective genres to new heights and represent a major step forward in PC gaming. Given this criteria, it would make us look a bit stupid if we awarded two or three every issue, and over the past 16 months since the introduction of our new scoring system we've only given out eight Classics.

This doesn't mean that all games scoring less should be ignored. Rather, the Classic tag points to the games that we can call true masterpieces and benchmark titles. The ones that are going to influence the direction of PC gaming in the near future. And it doesn't stop there. All review scores in our Top 100 are changed over time, to show their standing as and when new titles are released. So, a game that received 90 per cent a year ago, may not still be considered a Classic today. This means that on any given month you can find out exactly what we consider to be the best games in each genre.

Z PCZONE CLASSIC

ANTHONY HOLDEN
GENRE FPS, action/adventure, arcade
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Mr Driller*, *Counter-Strike*

3875ft

MARK HILL
GENRE Adventure, RPG, FPS
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Commandos 2* (preview)

Mr who?

CHRIS ANDERSON
GENRE RPG, adventure, strategy
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Anarchy Online*

What's a high score?

PAUL PRESLEY
GENRE FPS, action/adventure
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Operation Flashpoint*

Too busy playing *Operation Flashpoint*

STEVE HILL
GENRE Football, racing
CURRENTLY PLAYING Some *Star Trek* game

Zero

KEITH PULLIN
GENRE Adventure/RTS
CURRENTLY PLAYING *Black & White* – more black than white

2856ft

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

ALONE IN THE DARK: THE NEW NIGHTMARE

⭐ £34.99 • Infogrames • Out June

The granddaddy of survival horror gets a 21st century facelift. *Mark Hill* shines his torch on the wrinkles

Strange how games keep coming back to the same images and themes in their tireless efforts to scare us. Haunted houses, with dark rooms where shadows move in the corner of one's eye and grunting corpses scrape the wooden floors with their gammy legs; dark woods, intermittently lit by the lighting of a deafening thunderstorm and alive with the sound of creaking branches and overexcited owls. It's hardly original stuff, but it's been put to great effect in games such as *Undying*, the *Resident Evil* series and *Nocturne* (not to mention *Realms Of The Haunting* or the original *Alone In The Dark*). Why do we never get some real sources of fear? How about a game where you have to walk through Brixton late at night, dodging babbling weirdos whose hands are permanently attached to cans of Skol? Or one where you have endure a twelve hour flight while the plane is convulsed by uninterrupted turbulence even the crew acknowledge as severe and with the whole

younger and has grown a grunge hairstyle despite being about a hundred years older, but since this is aimed at the console market perhaps the thinking is that no one will notice. We'll come back to the console orientation of the game later (see the PlayStation panel). Events are triggered when Carnby receives a message saying that his good friend Fiske has been found dead on Shadow Island (you'd never imagine it could be a bad place with a name like that, would you?) and he sets out to investigate. With him is Aline Cedrac, an archaeologist sent to find the ancient tablets that Fiske was looking for. What they uncover on Shadow Island can only be described as a cross between *The Island of Dr Moreau* – a mad scientist's experiments have created a breed of horrible monsters – and *The X-Files* – the whole thing is part of a government conspiracy yadda-yadda-yadda… On their flight to the island, Carnby and Aline are forced to parachute from the plane and in turn become separated. Carnby starts out in the woods and has to make

"I'm on the train!" Let's hope his brains fry.

Looks like a ghost out of *Scooby Doo*.

"I bet you've never had a deformed creature rip your arm right off."

> **"What they uncover on Shadow Island can only be described as a cross between *The Island of Dr Moreau* and *The X-Files*"**

entertainment system down? And if you're looking for something really terrifying, what about a wrinkly old lady trying to force-feed you salty porridge in an Orkney Island Bed & Breakfast? I've lived through them all, and I can tell you they're every bit as scary as zombie-ridden mansions. Deplorably, *Alone In The Dark: The New Nightmare* sticks closely to conventions and starts you off in some dark woods during a thunderstorm before sending you to an old house packed with monsters for the rest of the game.

ISOLOPHOBIA
The first thing all you *Alone In The Dark* old-hands should know is that *The New Nightmare* is set in the modern day rather than a turn of the century quaint era. No explanation is offered as to why Edward Carnby is

his way to Aline, who is trapped in the mansion. You can choose which character to play as and, rather than playing the same game, you get to experience the adventure from a completely different perspective.

Although with Aline the game concentrates much more on intensive puzzle-solving and pure adventure – she doesn't even start out with a weapon – Carnby's side of the game also emphasises exploration over action. Rather than the tides of zombies from *Resident Evil*, *Alone In The Dark* opts for a quieter approach. You can spend large sections of the game running around from room to room, examining objects and piecing together the mystery of what's really going on without facing any enemies. This is supposed to enhance the horror of the monsters when they do actually appear although, as we'll see later, that doesn't

Things are going weird. A Native American can't be far away.
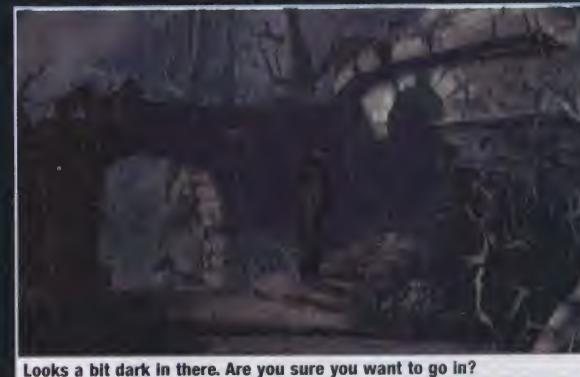
Looks a bit dark in there. Are you sure you want to go in?

Watching Aline run is like *Charlie's Angels*, but with less beaches.

They must have though the crawling dying dogs were hilarious.

These critters are the most abundant monsters.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Which character should you choose, and does it really matter?

Before you begin the game proper you're presented with the choice of Edward Carnby or Aline before a deep and cavernous voice tells you that this is, "*Alone In The Dark*" in a complete rip-off of the beginning of *Resident Evil*. Rather than an aesthetic choice, the game is completely different depending on which character you choose. Cleverly, Aline and Carnby keep in contact with each other via radio so you always get to know what the other one has found out. It means that when you play as the other character you know all the important points of the plot already, but it does give you a sense of seeing the story from different sides. The dialogue is slightly different on each side, so you get a sense of individual perspective too. You could argue that this is just a way of stretching out what would otherwise be a shorter game, but the exercise works rather well. In fact, the plot is more interesting if you play as Aline since she has a personal history with a direct involvement in the story. Her quest is not only for the ancient tablets but for her father and her own past.

EDWARD CARNBY
33 Years old.

Profession :
Private Eye.

Special quote :
Owns a double barrel gun.

Do you want to be the shallow idiot with the guns...

ALINE CEDRAC.
27 years old.

Enthnology Professor.
at the Boston University.

Special quote :
Father unknown.

...or the sexy ethnologist with no father?

These zombie-like creatures move slowly but their animation is perfect.

An old woman lying in bed beckons. Now that's scary.

Yes, shoot it by all means, but what the hell is it?

always work out. The bulk of the game goes on inside the mansion and, like the one in *Undying*, this is one huge building, with seemingly hundreds of rooms and about three times more doors. You are provided with a simplistic map of your immediate area, but getting lost is still a big problem. You often end up somewhere you've already been, nostrils flaring in exasperation. As with most titles, you are herded through by finding appropriate keys to doors that open up new areas, but *The New Nightmare* allows you a certain amount of freedom to wander off into other wings of the mansion and return to previously explored rooms to make sure you haven't missed anything. There are the usual array of health kits and ammo packs along with keys of all sizes, documents that give you background information and the occasional object used to solve puzzles. As befits a game designed to be played in a front room with a gamepad, these are never too taxing and are usually quite logical. One clue goes to all the trouble of

WALKTHROUGH

TOGETHER IN THE DARK

AITD isn't the most difficult game around, but this should give you an idea of what to expect. This is the beginning of the game for Carnby, you'll have to play it yourself if you want to see how it is for Aline

Why is it that monsters always disappear in a flash of light?

writing itself backwards, but that's about as far as the hard thinking goes.

CLAUSTROPHOBIA

Take a quick peek at the screenshots. Nice, aren't they? This is one area where *The New Nightmare* really excels. The much talked about pre-rendered backgrounds fill each screen with sumptuous detail and the character animations are very good. Developer Darkworks obviously spent a lot of time making sure the animations

where the hell you are. Most of the house is plunged in darkness and switching on your torch always opens a delightful world of paintings, elaborate carpets and dozens of ornaments.

Best of all though, you don't even have to pay a high price for all this intricate detail. Moving from one location to the next is almost seamless, even on lower end machines (PII 400), which is hugely impressive when you consider how detailed the backgrounds are. And with this kind of

that there aren't times when they're more of a hindrance than anything else. Sometimes you'll find yourself walking down a corridor with the camera behind you, only to be attacked from the front, so you can't see a damn thing, forcing you to have to shoot blindly while looking at Carnby's (or, if you're particularly lucky, Aline's) backside.

NYCTOPHOBIA

As I've already mentioned, Carnby starts the game in some dark woods in the middle of a storm, where the scary atmosphere is supposed to be created by the sound of thunder and some risible owls hooting as if in competition with each other. The minimalist soundtrack (consisting of only four notes) does a better job but soon begins to grate. Later, the music turns into a grindingly slow industrial soundtrack. The rhythms of heavy machinery are more likely to give you a headache than the creeps. But the main problem is that the exploratory nature of the game relies too much on the theory that when the monsters do finally appear →

> **"Moving from one location to the next is almost seamless, even on lower end machines, which is hugely impressive"**

felt smooth and realistic and didn't clash too much with the backgrounds, and they have succeeded. The feature that stands out most though is the way the engine handles the lighting effects, which are almost on a par with those in the superb *Nocturne* engine. Your torch is the single most important item in your inventory. It helps show off the engine, find vital clues and allows you to see

free-flowing gameplay, it's easy to become absorbed in exploring the manor and solving puzzles. You even stop caring about the occasionally dodgy camera angles – so often the bane of survival horror titles. *Nocturne* was heavily criticised for its unforgiving and artificial angles, but they enhanced the idea of a world gone askew, as they do here. That's not to say

PAYSTATION

Or should that be PainStation?

These pages have been filled with much moaning over the years about poor PlayStation conversions that pay little attention to the PC format. Only last month we were disgusted by the shameless port of five year-old technology in *Evil Dead*. With the release of the PlayStation 2 we thought those days were over, but Infogrames decided to make this a PSX game instead. While *AITD* looks pretty good (the reason being that it's also coming out on Dreamcast) you can't escape the feeling that it's a console game above all. The controls are almost identical to *Resident Evil* and there is no mouse support whatsoever. There is no reload button for your weapon, so if you run out of ammo you have to go into the inventory and do it manually. The interface itself is a slightly clumsy affair, modelling itself again after *Res Evil*. When you think that the brilliant *Tony Hawk's 2* was a port you realise that we shouldn't have to put up with this.

The inventory is less than intuitive.

More a PSX and Dreamcast game than a PC one.

ENIJ

1 Your tattered parachute hangs on a nearby tree, looks like you'll have to find a way out of these woods.
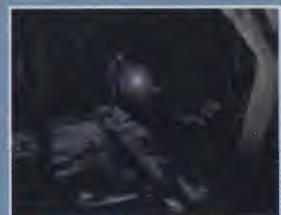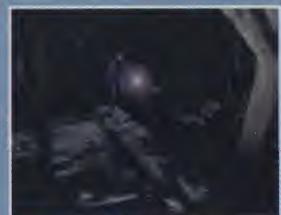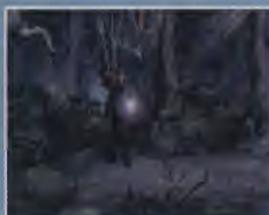
2 You find your way to a dying man in a stone room. Take the key lying next to him before he blows his brains out.

3 See, the key comes in handy almost straight away. Use it to open this gate and get into the mansion's grounds.

4 Your first victims are a bunch of dogs. Dispatch them as cruelly as possible and watch them crawl. You sick bastard.

5 Turn this valve to empty a nearby pond and access the sewers into the house. You didn't want to swim, did you?

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Studies are usually the best places to find journals and other clues.

Harry didn't like being called sworn at too much.

"It's behind you!" "No it isn't!" "Yes it is!" And so on.
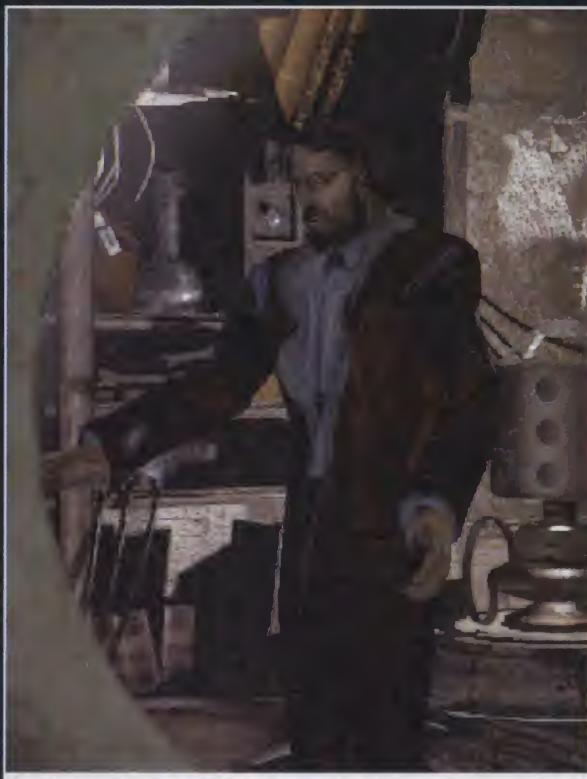
Cut scenes give the game a more cinematic tone.

GLOSSARYPHOBIA

Alone In The Dark: The New Nightmare was supposed to frighten us, but we're not sure all of the fears it inspired were intentional

NYCTOPHOBIA

Fear of darkness. Sometimes the near blackness of the screen becomes too much, and not even the torch can save you from squinting. Not to mention the dark screen that appears when loading new sections.

CLAUSTROPHOBIA

Fear of confined spaces. The house may be big, but as you stumble into the 97th small room you might find your breath quickening for want of some more space. Those highly detailed screens can be quite oppressive.

ISOLOPHOBIA

Fear of being alone. There are two characters, although they seem to prefer being alone.

MELOPHOBIA

Fear and hatred of music. After playing the game for a while you soon grow to hate the jarring music.

There are other phobias that may or may not be pertinent to Alone In The Dark: Oneirogmophobia, fear of wet dreams (you'd have to be clinically sad to dream of Aline); alliumphobia, fear of garlic (nothing to do with the game being French); logizomechanophobia, fear of computers (but love of consoles, apparently) and arachibutyrophobia, fear of peanut butter sticking to the roof of the mouth (I'm not making this up, honest).

you'll be so used to their absence they'll scare you to death. Unfortunately the monsters are not very scary at all, consisting mostly of long-legged creatures in the shape of large crustaceans, which would have been more effective had they come in waves. Even the obligatory zombies, despite being beautifully animated, aren't really frightening. When the undead in *Resident Evil* grabbed hold of you, you could almost feel their rotting teeth sinking into your scalp, tearing flesh, bone and brain.

INPERSPECTIVE

We still think *Resident Evil 3* is the best survival horror out there, but *AITD* offers something a little bit different. If you want to go first-person, *Undying* and *System Shock 2* are horror at its best.

System Shock 2

AITD: The New Nightmare

Resident Evil 3

Undying

The sound of their distant grunting alone was enough to make you quiver. Here there is no sense of real danger when one of them grabs you. You never feel immersed enough to care what's happening to your

and more thoughtful pace. It may not be truly scary and it does have a number of flaws, but few other titles allow you to explore and solve puzzles with as much style and attention to detail. The option to play both

> ## "There are plenty of moments of genuine tension and, while you never quite jump out of your seat, your heart will skip a beat"
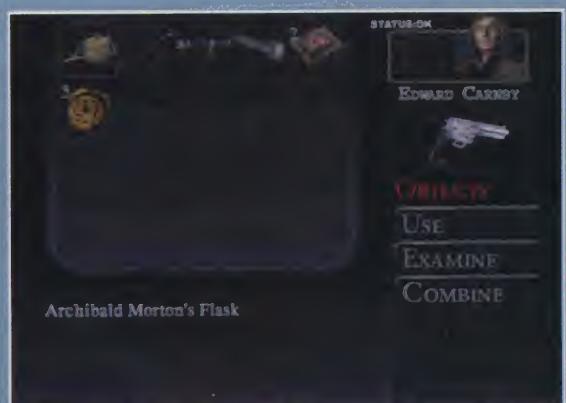
character. Perhaps more time should have been spent making Carnby into a likeable figure instead of the twat he comes across as, or making the attacks on your character look more distressingly violent or even coming up with some better creatures.

However, there are plenty of moments of genuine tension and, while you never quite jump out of your seat, your heart will skip a small beat. An inoffensive bed might burst into giant tentacles as your browse its nearby chest of drawers or a facehugger (lifted straight from *Half-Life*) might jump at you out of nowhere. But there is rarely a sustained feeling of fright.

PHOBIAPHOBIA

Despite the inevitable comparisons with *Resident Evil*, *Alone In The Dark: The New Nightmare* manages to stand by itself as a gothic adventure game that will appeal to those with a preference for a slower

sides of the story is an innovative way to expand the gameplay while adding a layer of depth rarely seen in action/adventures. It may not be the masterpiece we were all hoping for but it certainly beats sitting in a room with no lights on with no one to talk to. **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Proccessor P266 **MEMORY** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** At least a PII 400 with 64Mb memory

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Great animations • Highly detailed backgrounds • Very different game depending on character

⊕ **DOWNERS** Screen loading • Not scary enough • Exploring eventually become dull • Under par music

80

Taxes the mind just as much as the reflexes

Werebear: Transform into a hulking beast of the wilds

Molten Boulder: Unleash a smoldering mass of brimstone to crush your opponent

Werewolf: Assume the shape of nature's feral hunter

Druid: A solitary shaman of the northern wilds, this brooding mystic is the ruler of the forest. Having command over the elements as well as the power to transform himself into vicious creatures, the Druid is the embodiment of Nature's fury.

DIABLO II

EXPANSION SET

LORD OF DESTRUCTION

COMING SOON

Like most of the crew, talk to her and she'll tell you to go away.

You might be brave and fearless, but you'll be crying like a baby after being shot in the Klingons.

Eat lead sucker, or in this case instant laser death.

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE EXPANSION PACK

✪ £19.99 • Activision • Out now

The best *Star Trek* game just got a little bigger. Les Ellis tries his best not to offend the diehard Trekkies

O K, a warning in advance. If you're a fan of *Star Trek* or *Voyager* then just take it for granted that you'll love this and don't read on, as you may be offended by certain terms used in this review. They gone? OK, here we go. If you're expecting another dose of story-orientated first-person action, forget it – this expansion pack has been designed purely with the bordering-on-geekish *Voyager* fan in mind. Why else would the chance to walk around 15 decks of the ship be included? It sure as hell isn't for plot reasons. You may get little missions when you're here, but exactly how long are tasks such as 'go to this deck and get this object' really going to last you? Not long, unless you really want to look at every sign on every wall to see if it's in the right position.

REALITY CHECK

There are a lot of features designed to attract the hardcore *Voyager* fan: being able to talk to all the characters; having a dialogue performed by Jeri Ryan (Seven of Nine to the rest of us); having the chance to wander around locations like the sick bay and crew's quarters. But when most of the characters brush you off with a short, go away-style comment, more casual gamers will start to see the cracks.

> ❝Setting the self-destruct sequence? Er, well that's one way to end your game quickly, I guess❞

And the much-talked about Captain Proton new Holo level? To fans that will be interesting because it's played in black and white. To the rest of us *Counter-Strike* freaks, it's just a black-and-white level – not very hi-tech at all. But wait, before it gets written off completely, the assault on the Klingon compound – the other single-player mission – is pretty action-packed, if the lure of exploring the 15 decks of real *Voyager* locations is not your thing.

Some of the interaction with your environment seems a bit strange as well. Setting the self-destruct sequence? Er, well that's one way to end your game quickly I guess. Even finding all the action figures that have been hidden away seems to be more of a distraction than a gaming feature. Thank God the Holodeck is still there to give us some stuff to kill, because if it wasn't the Delta Quadrant would be a really dull place.

HOLO MAN

Multiplayer – so this is where most of the work for the expansion pack has gone. There are 17 new maps, 12 new models and two new types of game, including an excellent Assimilate mode, which plays like British Bulldog (capture an opposing player and they have to join your side). In the team-based game, different classes have to play the game according to their strengths – obviously the guys in red are the cannon fodder and engineers don't fight as well as the Strike Team. While *Counter-Strike* does this so much better, it's still one the highlights of this add-on pack.

Elite Force ranked well behind the heavy hitters when it came to online action, and this expansion isn't really going to promote it in anyone's eyes (except for *Star Trek* nuts who'll be excited at having the chance to play as Captain Proton).

Elite Force managed to maintain an air of mainstream respectability thanks to a driving storyline. With that taken away, the mainstream has been relegated in favour of a 'one for the boys' approach. If you can name the entire crew of the *Voyager* and most of the episodes, then put down your model phaser and grab this with both hands. If, like the rest of us, you've moved on – this won't be beaming on to your hard drive upon its release. They've tried to do something different with a plain old mission disc, and it isn't going to work for anyone. PCZ

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 233 **Memory** 64 Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 8Mb AGP or PCI 3D accelerator card **WE SAY** Beam up a bigger 3D card if you want the the full effect. A P400 would be good too

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** New multiplayer options
• Heaven for hardcore fans

⊖ **DOWNERS** Hell for casual gamers
• Not much for the single player

70 Not so much the elite as an also-ran (143.7 % if you're a *Star Trek* fan)

IN PERSPECTIVE

When it comes to first-person shooters, and even add-ons for FPSs, it's hardly what you call a sparsely populated market.

Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force Expansion

Counter-Strike

Quake III Team Arena

Unreal Tournament

Our editor's new house.

Achtung! Mine!

Burn the witch! Burn the witch!

The reason you became a dictator in the first place.

TROPICO

⭐ £34.99 • Take 2 Interactive • Out now

Closet fascist *Daniel Emery* always wanted to be a dictator, but couldn't find anyone to follow him. Strange that...

Those gadget catalogues that fall out of periodicals at the most inopportune moments are either goldmines or graveyards (depending on your point of view) of fantastic ideas given flesh. Or at least pre-moulded plastic and a nifty marketing catch phrase. However, while the ideas look terrific on

paper, and the products look great, you usually find that the Everlasting Light Bulb blows after a few weeks, and the Radio Controlled Clock turns out to be just a clock. No remote control, no stunt flying.

Tropico also looks fantastic on paper. The premise behind the game is simple and to the point. You have risen to power on a tropical island in the Caribbean and you have to transform your Third World island, consisting of a few shacks and some farms, into a thriving powerhouse of an economy. In this respect, there is more than an uncanny similarity to *SimCity*, where you have to provide housing for your virtual masses, and cater to their day-to-day demands. Churches, housing, education and basic healthcare are the most pressing requirements, so it's a click-and-build fest to create your very own paradise-on-sea.

However, things aren't quite so easy. As in the real world, everything costs. In large amounts. And schools don't really make much in the way of money (despite Government attempts over recent years). You have to fund all these building works, and so to this end, you need to start creating either a nice sideline in tourism or some export industries. As your starting funds tend to be just slightly shy of broke, you have to exploit the basic resources that are at your disposal. Farms can be converted to produce things such as coffee, bananas, sugar and the like. And that tropical jungle is ripe for some serious slash-and-burn timber removal. All of which can be sold to a demanding Western world. However, devastating your forests will turn your island from paradise lost to Runcorn found. Not something that will have the tourists flocking in.

Once you start to get some kind of income trickling in, you can develop some factories and industries. Not only will the bank balance grow, but you'll keep more of your island's inhabitants employed. And this is important because your population are not just worker drones there to do your bidding but have individual thoughts, feelings, needs and most importantly, political leanings.

BANANA REPUBLIC
You see, despite being an *el presidente*-style dictator, you still have to get re-elected every ten years. And, although you can always rig the electoral ballot (well if they can do it in the US, they can do it anywhere), this only pushes the vote up 20 per cent your way, so if you're as popular as a randy dog in a Miss Lovely

Legs contest, all the bribery in the world isn't going to get you another term. Just to complicate matters more (and quite true to life) some of the various political views are polar opposites.

Communists, capitalists, environmentalists, militarists (we're guessing fascists wouldn't have gone down well in Germany), religious fanatics – every political faction you can think of is represented on the island, and they've all got their own agenda. Some will want bigger factories, others will want to preserve the rainforest. And if one group gets too pissed off, they run to the hills (for a while) then come back to your tropical town. With guns. Lots of guns. Cue one civil war, and bad news for your election manifesto.

As if all this wasn't enough to keep tabs on, you have both the
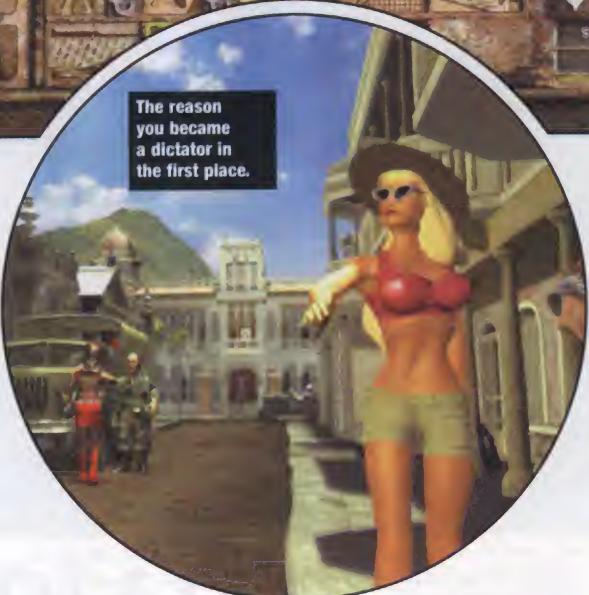
Beach, pool and half-built hotel. Perfect.

Not the prettiest or most functional interface either.

A nice little sideline in tobacco can make you a rich man.

Home sweet home.

Six teachers and one pupil. I can see some staff restructuring coming on. Or a contraceptive ban.

two superpowers breathing down your neck (and supporting any insurgents if they take a real dislike to you). Uncle Sam and the glorious Soviet Republic both take more than a passing interest in your affairs (although you can turn this to your advantage, as the occasional donation can come in very handy). And we haven't even mentioned tourists yet, who trickle then flock to your island (providing you create a few hotels

> ## "Naturally, being a slightly corrupt dicator, you might want to cream off the occasional dollar for a rainy day"

and some dodgy nightclubs). Yet more loot for the treasury coffers. At least most of it. Naturally, being a slightly corrupt dictator, you might want to cream off the occasional dollar for a rainy day, if your bank account in Switzerland is looking a little barren.

POINTLESS INVENTIONS
So what's the problem? This has all the makings of a fantastic game... Well, just like the Radio Controlled Clock, what looks great on paper is a disappointment in reality. And the crux of the issue is

the technology used to create the game. The developer, PopTop Software, shot to fame in 1999 with the utterly fantastic *Railroad Tycoon 2*. A tile-based, four-view isometric game in which the aim was to create a thriving country by linking up various industrial centres with the local population. Three years on, and *Tropico* bears more than just a passing resemblance to its erstwhile big brother. Four-view isometric, tile-based and frankly when compared to games released in 2001, looking very old and tired.

And the troubles don't end there. While the buildings have been drawn to an intricate level, basic things such as being able to plane rectangular buildings at a 90-degree angle have been left out, so any attempt to create a city of dreams ends up being the town of nightmares (just like Runcorn). While every person on the island has their own thoughts, this is largely superfluous as you run the island on a macro, not micro scale.

Tropico is a disappointment, as so much more could have been done. And while the game will appeal to a small core of gamers who still hanker after *Railroad Tycoon*, everyone else will be left feeling just a little bit bored, and very ripped off by the unwarranted £34.99 price tag. Great inventions change the world. Mediocre or useless ones end up in a catalogue. No prizes for guessing where *Tropico* is headed.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 **Memory** 32Mb Ram **WE SAY** Speed of the processor seems fine, but up the memory to 64Mb unless you want some serious lag when changing views

PCZ VERDICT

❶ **UPPERS** Original idea • Very detailed graphics • Humorous

❷ **DOWNERS** Tired engine • Bad oversight on rotating buildings • Unnecessary information on the small stuff, not enough on the big stuff

59
Gets a vote of no confidence

ARE THEY RELATED?

Just in case you rightly thought *Tropico* was *Railroad Tycoon 2* in disguise, but not as good...

The utterly fantastic tile-based *Railroad Tycoon 2*. Ground-breaking in its day, and still fun for the occasional game now.

A rather tired and old *Tropico*, with an epic price tag for a decidedly non-epic game.

MR DRILLER

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

⊙ £9.99 • Midas Games • Out now

Anthony Holden can bore his way out of any situation

I f there are any superfluous lines or phrases in this review, the blame must lie with the insidious nature of this brilliantly addictive arcade puzzler. You see, having enjoyed the antics of *Mr Driller* far longer than was strictly necessary for the purposes of the review, the anxious block-dodging logistics of the game began to intrude on the rest of my life. I couldn't click on a link on a website for fear of the ones above tumbling down and causing a terrible chain reaction, I couldn't play *Counter-Strike* without wondering where my next packet of air was coming from, and worst of all, I found myself incapable of

you have a screen full of variously shaped and coloured blocks and a little guy with a drill. Of course, there are complications. Our hero Susumu is only flesh and blood, and needs a steady supply of air to stay alive, supplied by oxygen capsules scattered among the blocks. Some blocks, marked X, are tougher than the rest, and can only be penetrated at the expense of time and a capsule's worth of air. Worse yet, as you cut a path down through the layers, blocks left unsupported teeter briefly before collapsing downwards towards your vulnerable little pal. If the falling blocks touch a like-coloured block on their way down they will stick there, either

> **❝You have a screen full of variously shaped and coloured blocks and a little guy with a drill. Of course, there are complications❞**

editing Word documents without imagining getting squished by collapsing blocks of text.

Whether this indicates an imbalance on my part is open to question, but I prefer to think of it as testament to the compulsive playability of *Mr Driller*. And since the rest of *PC ZONE* is too busy drilling to comment, I doubt I'll find much in the way of argument.

DO YOUR BLOCK

The concept is this: multi-coloured blocks are invading the earth from deep beneath the ground, and it's up to Mr Driller to bore his way through them and stem the onslaught of evil lozenges before they, er… block something. So,

creating a new ceiling for your mining activities or, if the newly formed cluster is four or more blocks in size, bursting, with bonus points awarded in proportion to the size of the clump. The resulting gameplay is arcade puzzling at its best. Air capsules become increasingly scarce and better protected by X-blocks as you descend, and the race against asphyxiation and falling blocks makes for frantic and panicky drilling.

DIG THIS

Comparisons to viral über-puzzler *Tetris* are unavoidable, given the style of the game and falling blocks motif, but it's only a superficial similarity. Both games combine cognitive and twitch-based gameplay, but *Mr Driller* leans far more towards the latter. If anything, *Dig Dug* is probably a better reference point.

We could go ahead and criticise *Mr Driller* for its lack of a two-player mode, but this seems downright petty when you look at the price of this little gem. It's a beautifully realised arcade puzzle game, and the fact that your life will become a walking nightmare of collapsing building blocks should be of secondary concern. **PCZ**

IN PERSPECTIVE

Great puzzle games only come around once in a while, and this is one of them. *Tetris* will probably never be bettered, and the *Bust A Move* series is equally essential

Tetris

Bust A Move 4

Mr Driller

Super Pang

This will haunt your dreams.

Don't do it Mr Drillo.

Low resolution 2D graphics. Brilliant.
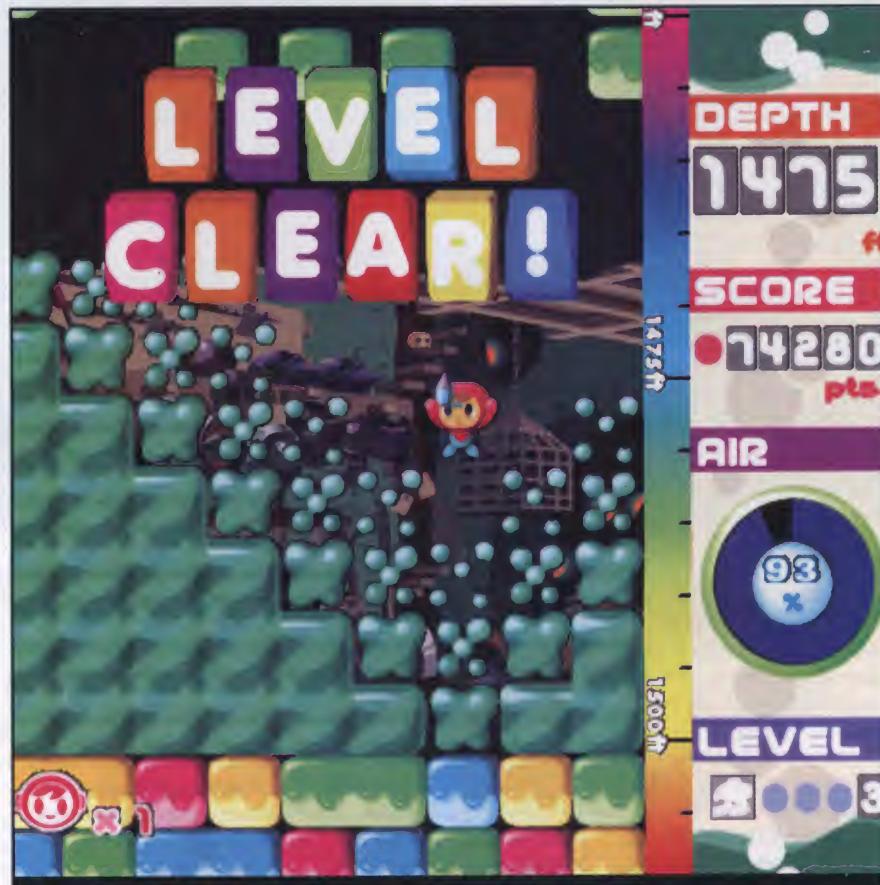
TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Proccessor Pentium MMX200 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 60Mb disc space **WE SAY** Will only run in low-res mode with these specs

PCZ VERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Supremely addictive • Genuinely challenging • Great music • Cheap!

⊖ **DOWNERS** It really is rather addictive • May lead to hallucinations • No two-player mode

80 Mesmerisingly good fun
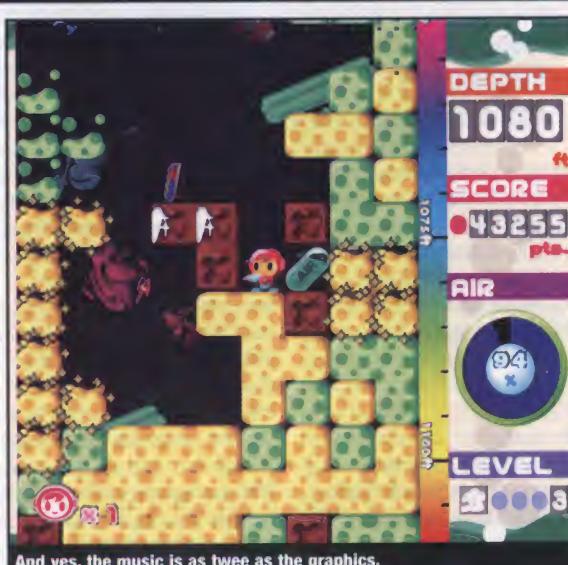
And yes, the music is as twee as the graphics.
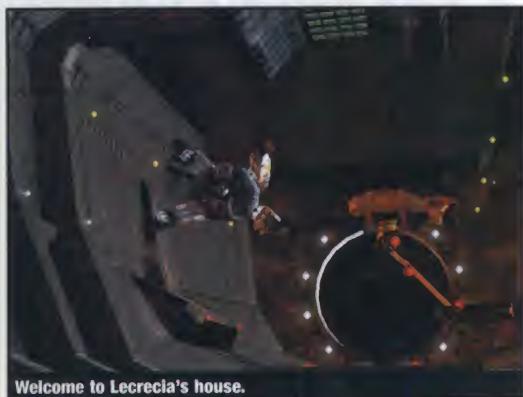
Welcome to Lecrecia's house.

Breakdown services will see plenty of business in the future.

The awsome Corvette, AKA the Iron Sheik.

EDGE OF CHAOS: INDEPENDENCE WAR 2

⊙ £34.99 • Infogrames • Out June 15

Martin Korda finds himself on the edge of sanity. So just another day in the office then

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

⊙ In the navy, in the navy…

The last couple of days have been far from easy. It's been a race to get myself fit in time to write this review, after one of the most demanding gaming experiences of my life – so demanding in fact, that it's literally sent my brain into meltdown. I've been forced to store certain sections of my mind in a glass jar, as it's been spilling all over the floor from the strain of it all. However, against all the odds, I've managed to force the spillages back in with the aid of a broken-off cue tip, and have started typing again with the help

sim, which tries to mix a powerful storyline and a freeform universe into a game with universal appeal, but instead manages to entertain and annoy you in near identical measures.

ALL CHANGE

So what's so damn complicated about it I hear you ask, after all, it's just a space combat sim. Launch, shoot some aliens, land. Easy right? Wrong. In fact, as far as *Edge Of Chaos* is concerned this couldn't be further from the

> **"Scrambles your innards with its concoction of awe-inspiring ideas and infuriating shortcomings"**

of a pencil jammed up one of my nostrils. Which means I can finally start telling you about the game which struck me down in the first place. A game so deep, complex and intriguing and yet at times hideously confusing that it scrambles your innards and toys with your emotions with its concoction of awe-inspiring ideas and infuriating shortcomings. I am of course talking about *Edge Of Chaos* – an epic space combat

truth. Take the manual for example. In it you'll find all sorts of techie information about Newtonian flight models, advanced piloting techniques, strafing manoeuvres and even tips on how to regulate the heat of your craft to maximise your stealth capabilities. It tells of countless star systems, all of which can be explored and interacted with freely. And yet all the while, there's a storyline

running in the background, ushering you in the right direction at key moments. Then there's the trading, pirating, manufacturing and recycling of goods. There's even an encyclopedia which fills you in on the game's background, and prequel, *Independence War*. You soon realise that there's a whole universe of ideas out there and you're going to have to explore them all at some stage. And that's when the panic sets in, and the sweat starts to pour from your forehead onto the manual, smudging all the ink and leaving you stranded on your knees, clawing at the page in a futile attempt to wipe the pages clean just so you can try to understand this daunting game. Just as well then that things start to fall into

place (albeit slowly) once you fire the game up. But more on that in a minute.

THE STORYLINE BIT

Before we go on, it's probably a good idea to fill you in on what *Edge Of Chaos* is all about. You play Cal Johnston, son of Felix who in turn was the son of ex-pirate Lucrecia Johnston. The scene is set by a hugely impressive ten-minute intro, with professional voice actors adding life to the gorgeously rendered characters. It shows how a 12-year-old Cal watches helplessly as his father gets killed by the evil Caleb Maas, or Caleb Maaaarss as he constantly refers to himself, as he's a bit of toff. He's all like, "My name is Caleb Maaaars, heir to the Maaaars dynasty, I do so hate conversing with poor people." Needless to say, he's a bloody nasty piece of work. But before you have a chance to go round to give him a fine kicking for what he's done to your old man, you get banged up for 80 years for failing

Nice little motah you got there.

Now that's what I call a pair of headlights.

No getting away from them, even in a game.

Dog fighting takes some getting used to.

The Corvette has turrets and everything.

Everybody like explosions.

Under construction. Keep out.

Edge Of Chaos' graphics are some of the most impressive ever seen.

to pay off your father's debts, which kind of puts your plans for revenge on the backburner.

A mere 15 years later (hey, it could've been worse), Cal and four other inmates manage to escape and set up shop as would-be pirates at Lucrecia's Base, the old headquarters of Cal's late pirate grandmother. Follow so far? Good.

OK, from here, the plot is divided into three acts. In the first

one you have to build up your pirating empire by nicking as much as you can from law-abiding traders and completing

"Backed by one of the most atmospheric soundtracks yet to grace the PC"

important tasks for corporations in return for goods.

Of the three, this act is by far the most confusing if you're

simply trying to stick to the storyline, as you're never quite sure which missions will progress the plot, and which ones are just

throwaway sub-games that can be ignored. So you end up doing all of them, half the time getting lost while feeling very bored

because you can't find the location your briefing eluded to, and generally getting pissed off at being so disorientated.

However, if you're into your freeform, elite-style trading, then you'll be in your element, jumping from one star system to the next, spoddily memorising the location of every space station while hijacking transport ships, stealing goods, recycling them,

manufacturing new ones and then trading them with someone else. If you're prepared to forego the storyline for a while, it's pretty easy to totally immerse yourself in this freeform style of play, indulging in ever more daring raids to boost your arsenal and satisfy your overly demanding customers. After a few hours, you'll be gripped with the will to discover better weaponry for

THE USUAL SUSPECTS

Although they're not developed quite as well as they could be, *Edge Of Chaos'* characters have distinct personalities and important roles to play

Cal Johnston

This is you, a square-jawed hero with a stereotypically gravelly voice. Leader of the pirates, your main goals in life are to help the repressed underclasses against their corporate oppressors and avenge your father's death, by tracking down and killing the ruthless and evil Caleb Maas. Oh yeah, you've been to prison and everything, so you're really hard, too.

Lemuel Smith

Second-in-command Lemuel obviously missed the point when trying to make himself look like a genuine pirate, hacking off an arm instead of a leg and having tattoos drawn on his shoulder in place of a parrot. Lemuel helped Cal survive the rigours of a hard labour camp for 15 years, and with a prosthetic arm that size, I don't doubt it for a second.

Azraelle 'Ibuki' Takagi

A distant descendent of David Coulthard, there's more to this mysterious gal than an affinity with crap F1 drivers. Staunchly loyal to you, she's a lethal pilot with as much ability as she has jawline. She'll start flying on your wing just as soon as you steal her a ship and find her a helmet big enough to fit over her head.

Lori Trieste

Spoilt rich girl Lori is still trying to get over the fact that daddy didn't buy her a space scooter for her 16th birthday. Having turned her back on her life as heiress to the Trieste dynasty, she's determined to make a name for herself as a hard-nosed combat pilot, so long as it doesn't get in the way of manicures and her weekly trip to the therapist.

Jafs

Fat, bald and dumb-looking, Jafs' role is to get the best price for the things you steal. In an attempt to make him feel useful, Jafs is also given the task of picking up and dropping off cargo. This gives the former street urchin a major role in the game, helping him regain his sense of self-worth while providing him with a distraction from eating doughnuts.

Caleb Maas

Speaking of stereotypes, how about this one? While Caleb may have a ridiculous name that sounds like a luxury cruise liner, he's also the heir to the Maas dynasty and responsible for Cal's father's death. He's rich, ruthless and infamous, and only one person can stop him. No prizes for guessing who that might might be (hint – you).

The freeform universe throws up endless pirating possibilities.

your ships becoming almost irresistible. There are an incredible 20 types of weapon with six enhancements for each, and six categories of missile, along with detachable turrets that act as wingmen when they're not wired up to you. There are also superior defence systems – shields, countermeasures and mines. Backed by one of the most atmospheric soundtracks yet to grace the PC, playing *Edge Of Chaos* in this way becomes nothing short of hypnotic (for a few days anyway), as it pulls you back time and time again with its dark foreboding beauty, consuming your life like a virtual black hole.

In contrast, acts two (the forming of an alliance against corrupt corporations) and three (the second Independence War, which comes with an unexpected twist) are geared far more towards all you space combat purists, so it's just a shame that you have to wade through the first act in order to get to the real action. The plot is advanced by means of emails sent to your base by allies and in-game cut-scenes. However, after the hugely impressive FMVs at the start, you're left hanging on until the end of the game before you get to see another one, which leaves you feeling a bit cheated. Yes, cheated I tell you, in fact downright robbed I'd say. Where are the big-budget, explosion-laden, suspense-building FMVs, which help you push through the bad times? Times when you're bored of flying round space, bored

of being a pirate, singing shanties and talking about loot, when you're thinking of giving up and doing something which suddenly seems more interesting like flossing your teeth in front of morning TV? Where are they? Eh? Eh? They're not there, are they? Hmmm? No, they're bloody not. Which is a damn shame, because developer Particle Systems has

missed a glorious opportunity to propel not only this game, but the entire genre into another dimension. Imagine the best of *X – Beyond The Frontier* (trading, fighting and building up an empire), *Wing Commander IV* (a superb FMV-driven storyline) and *FreeSpace 2* (the best space-based dogfighting around) all bought together in one game.

TAKING CONTROL

Running a cutting-edge, state-of-the-art intergalactic battleship has never been so easy

One of the main goals Particle Systems set out to achieve when developing *Edge Of Chaos* was to make sure it didn't scare off casual gamers with ridiculously complicated keyboard layouts (shame it didn't apply that rule to everything eh?). So it came up with the HUD interface, a system which allows you to control every aspect of your ship, purely with the eight-way hat on your joystick. And would you believe it, it's actually really easy to use. Each direction takes you to a different menu (engineering, weapons, communications and navigation), from which you can issue commands quickly, efficiently and without complication. Expect to see countless rip-offs of this idea over the next couple of years.

The new HUD menu is a revolutionary control interface.

Mind that planet.

Strafing in combat is essential.

Attack the rear shields for best results.

PROXIMITY ALERT

Pull up, pull up.

That's what *Edge Of Chaos* could have been with a tighter, perhaps even branching storyline, backed up by some well-scripted FMVs and some clearer mission goals. It's a hugely ambitious project as it is, but it never quite manages to hit the mark the way you hope it will.

COME FLY WITH ME

So on to the all-important part, flying your ship, which of course is subject to this thing we touched on earlier called a Newtonian flight model. There are five ships at your disposal, ranging from wimpy but nippy fighters to the Iron Sheik of combat vessels, the Corvette. Each one is customisable to suit your style of play. While they all handle differently and pack varying amounts of firepower, they're all subject to the same physics. So if you're flying in a straight line at 2km a second and you suddenly do a 180 degree turn, you'll find yourself travelling backwards at 2km a second, as you're still being propelled by your original

inertia. Theoretically, it will take you as long to reach a standstill as it took you to get up to speed, so before you can start accelerating in your new direction, you have to wait for your engines to counter your original propulsion. Confused yet?

You probably won't be too surprised then, to learn that this is going to take some time to master, especially during

dogfights, where you have to start braking well in advance of enemies passing you. This is so that you can swing round behind them, hit the throttle, and take advantage of their unprotected rears more ruthlessly than a head teacher at an all boy's private school. For the first few hours, most duels simply degenerate into full-frontal charges, with the ship with the strongest shields and most powerful guns usually

ending up victorious. As you progress and start to learn various tricks, your enemies become ever more tricky to deal with, and dogfights become far more brutal affairs.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE

But that's only the start of it. One of the most innovative features is the ability to strafe. By turning at 90 degrees while travelling at

> **The revolutionary HUD display allows you to control every part of your ship via the eight-way hat on your joystick**

speed, you can run your vessel along the sides of larger ships. This not only makes you hard to hit, but allows you to inflict maximum damage over the largest possible area. You can also strafe as you fly forward (making you fly diagonally), by using the A and D keys, which along with the propulsion keys W (accelerator), S (brake) and the joystick (up, down, left, right) makes the combat interface

similar in style to a FPS. Again, you have to give yourself time to learn all the subtle tricks of space combat. This steep – er OK, more like vertical – learning curve is one of the things that gives *Edge Of Chaos* so much more of a lasting appeal than the likes of *Starlancer*, if you can only bring yourself to persevere long enough to find the quality hidden behind its reams of jargon and mind-wrenching complexity. It's just as well then that *Edge Of Chaos* comes with a revolutionary HUD display which allows you to control every part of your ship via the eight-way hat on your joystick.

A NEW DAWN

It's time to throw out your keyboards people (apart from the WSAD keys of course), the revolution is upon us. Simulation fans everywhere unite and gather together for a ritual burning of these outdated control devices. Break them with hammers and tell your children they're building blocks. Or use them to make your own home-made scrabble set. *Edge Of Chaos* has shown us the future, leading us to the promised land where gamers no longer have to toil with tacky incomprehensible keyboard layout cards, but instead use a set of simple, joystick-driven menu screens to issue commands. And it's just as well, because without this, *Edge Of Chaos* would simply be too mind-blowing for anyone other than total simulation geeks. Casual gamers everywhere would quite literally lose their minds while trying to keep track of what was going on, and the world's gaming community would be reduced to hordes of dribbling vegetables.

Despite its many plus points, and contrary to the over-optimistic claims made by the press release, *Edge Of Chaos* is, unfortunately, unlikely to appeal to the mass market. If you're an *X – Beyond The Frontier* fan, then you'll probably feel most at home

with it, while *StarLancer* lovers will no doubt end up feeling swamped by the enormity of it all. Regardless of who you are though, *Edge of Chaos* will test your patience and ability to their limits. Be warned, you'll need a stockpile of perseverance and mountains of spare time if you want to experience *Edge Of Chaos* at its best. However, if you're prepared to put the time in you'll uncover hidden treasures, glowing brightly from a game of true beauty (despite its flaws), style and intrigue, with innovations that should be an inspiration to space combat sim developers for years to come. This is just the beginning my friends. Even though these first few steps are far from perfect, this is surely the way forward for the genre, a blend of freeform gaming backed by an ever-evolving plot. If others improve on what *Edge Of Chaos* has begun, then an exciting future lies ahead… **PCZ**

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 400 **Memory** 128Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 16Mb 3D Card **WE SAY** The above is just about OK if you don't mind turning down the detail. To get the most out of it, try a PIII 733 with a 32Mb 3D card

PCZVERDICT

🔺 **UPPERS** Stunning graphics • Mesmerising sound track • Endless weeks of free-form gameplay • Well-written storyline • Simple-to-use, joystick-driven interface • Accurate Newtonian flight model

🔻 **DOWNERS** Dogfighting is initially infuriatingly hard • Takes too long to get into • Too easy to get lost • Occasionally unclear mission objectives • Fails to cater to a wide audience • No FMVs during game

83 A flawed vision of the future

Parachute in behind enemy lines.

You might want to get a bit closer.

"Behind you."

You can control every vehicle you see in the game.

SEEK AND DESTROY (172 m)

Tanks. Hard to kill. Easy to get squashed by.

OPERATION FLASHPOINT

⭐ £34.99 • Codemasters • Out late June

So, have we shot ourselves in the foot, or has the most anticipated military game of the year managed to live up to our expectations? Would you want to be _in Paul Presley_'s shoes right now? Thought not…

Z PCZONE CLASSIC

I've never been more scared to write a review in my life. It feels like we've been pushing _Flashpoint_ down your throats every day for the past 12 months now. What happens if it turns out to be crap? What happens if it's a bug-ridden mess, on par with the likes of _Hidden & Dangerous_ in the potential-over-implementation stakes? We're already receiving the kind of flak over _Black & White_ previously

associated with bombing raids across war-torn Berlin – which, incidentally, we don't understand your objections to. It's a stunning piece of gaming software. We're not sure anyone really forgave us for speaking our minds over _No One Lives Forever_ and you should see the letters we're getting from _Erotica Island_ fans. Actually, you shouldn't. The one with the used prophylactic as proof that it worked made me come over all queasy.

Anyway, the upshot is I've never wanted to back away from a review in all my life. You readers are starting to scare us. We can only wonder how long it will be before you actually decide to get violent in your disagreements with our reviews. The reason I'm quaking in my designer flares is because I know, without a shadow of a doubt, that a percentage of you are going to disagree with my assessment of _Operation Flashpoint_. So in

the finest tradition of all good cowards everywhere, I'm getting my retaliation in first.

CONTROLLING CHAOS

I'd be very surprised if anyone reading this didn't yet know what _Operation Flashpoint_ was. But I'm reliably informed that we have new members of the _ZONE_ brotherhood every month so, for the final time, sit back as we put on our deep-timbre American voice and go:

> **"If it's a vehicle and it's in the game world you can control it. That includes helicopters, planes, tanks, trucks, jeeps, tractors, boats and, of course, your own two feet"**

"Previously on *Operation Flashpoint…*"

The year is 1985, it's the most crucial stage of the Cold War and wouldn't you know it a rogue Communist faction led by a power-hungry Soviet General has decided to invade a series of NATO-held East European islands. Your part in the fight for global capitalism is manifold: a lowly grunt in the infantry, a tank commander, helicopter pilot, black ops saboteur, squad commander, even an A-10 pilot. During the course of the campaign you'll be fulfilling just about every role there is in the modern military, barring camp prostitute of course. Although there is a mission editor…

This is because the Czech developer, Bohemia Interactive, has decided to treat us to a 'total package' military simulation. With the emphasis on simulation. If it's a vehicle and it's in the game world, you can control it. That includes helicopters, planes, tanks, trucks, jeeps, tractors, boats, parachutes and, of course, your own two feet. OK, the flight sim aspect won't be rivalling the likes of *Falcon 4* or *Comanche Hokum* for realism, but can you name any other game that includes them all, often within the space of a single mission?

That's an important point actually – the structure of the missions. In fact, the structure of the whole game. This is a military simulation you see. This isn't a mere FPS with pretensions towards something bigger (*à la Project IGI* or *Counter-Strike*). The first few missions in the campaign hammer home just how realistic the atmosphere can get. You begin as a mere private in the army. When you start you'll just be a small part of a squad, not a Hollywood-style one-man army on the lowest difficulty setting. Consequently, the only way you're likely to get through it alive is to throw away your traditional shooter instincts and actually think about your surroundings, take cover when you're being shot at and do what you're damn well told to do by your CO.

In practice it's very, very impressive the way the command system works. The level of AI on show in *Flashpoint* is remarkable to say the least. You'll start with your basic objectives – defend this base from approaching troops, ➡

up
- reload weapon
SPACE - change weapon

LMB - fire
RMB - zoom

RETURN - action menu
- call commander

Watch your orders
or die like a dog.

1: "FORM LINE"
1: "GROUP, MOVE TO Tree 1 O'CLOCK"
5: "READY"
Alpha Black 1: "ALPHA TO BRAVO, WE'RE READY. ATTACK HOUDAN, WE'LL APPROACH FROM THE NORTH. OVER."
7: "WAITING"
9: "READY"

Now that's an
impressive shot.

Ah, there's the
lense flare.

126 m
T-80

Pilot (Richard Shoemaker): "TARGET T80"
Pilot (Richard Shoemaker): "FIRE"
Pilot (Richard Shoemaker): "FIRE"
Pilot (Richard Shoemaker): "FIRE"

Each level is huge.

Superb AI, but still
slightly shaky overall.

take the village square and so on – but once in the game your squad's commander will assess the situation and bark out orders depending on where you and your buddies are, where the enemy is and where other supporting forces might be. Since this is totally reactive to the in-game dynamics (as well as being true for all NPCs, enemy included) every time you retry a mission it truly feels different to before. Of course the fun magnifies once you've risen high enough to take command yourself and you're the one barking out orders, but whatever your rank, the impression of being in a real war zone where chaos reigns supreme is as close to perfect as it's likely to get. In fact,

this is so true to life that it has apparently provoked the interest of the real US military for use in training purposes. Which has to be better for the world than training them up on *Doom*.

FREEDOM FIGHTING

Now doesn't all that sound good? Exactly. That's been our attitude towards *Flashpoint* since we first heard about it: "What, you mean you run around on foot, drive a tank, hop into a jeep and ride in the back of a transport helicopter? All in the same mission? Gnarly." (We first heard about it a long time ago and certain phrases have since fallen out of fashion with the 'kidz'.) That was the other point I wanted to make. The way that the

multi-vehicle aspect isn't just a gimmick. You don't spend one level on foot, one level in a jeep, one level in a tank, one level in an Apache gunship and so on. The best way to demonstrate how complex and diverse the game can become is to simply describe a sample mission.

We're pulling out of an island due to overwhelming Russian forces. I'm riding in a Colonel's jeep who's describing the desperate nature of the situation. We pull up in a small town where US troops are boarding transports

to take them to the evacuation point. The Colonel tells me to get out of the jeep, get into a truck and drive one of the squads to safety. I hop out, run over and climb in the driver's seat, the others boarding in the back. As we drive off, a radio report comes in of fighting to the west, so I'm ordered to

"The fun magnifies once you've risen high enough to take command yourself"

investigate. I leave the convoy and drive my squad towards the noise. We hear fighting so we leave the obvious target of the truck, get out and charge forward on foot. Suddenly we're in a pitched battle with Russian troops and civilian resistance members.

The other thing that helps is that the playing area isn't contained. Like *IGI*, *Flashpoint* has huge go-anywhere landscapes. Unlike *IGI*, these aren't simply randomly generated, unpopulated mountains. If I'd wanted to, for instance, I could have driven the truck several miles to the south of the fighting, got out, and snuck up on the enemy from the cover of a forest. Each island is completely simulated in every mission. You probably won't want to go exploring but there's nothing to stop you grabbing an unlocked car and heading off anyway.

WHY OH WHY OH WHY?

This sounds like the greatest game ever to grace the PC world doesn't it? So why am I convinced that some of you are going to hate it and think I'm a lying scumbag in the pocket of the publishers due to the exclusive tag on our review? Here's why. It doesn't look finished.

I think it's safe to say that *Operation Flashpoint* is perhaps the most under-polished-looking game that we've seen in a long time. Codemasters has done its best to paper over the cracks and amend the more obvious things. Initially the 3D models all had movement routines that made them look like Parkinson's Disease sufferers when they were standing still, and had the kind of bent wrists that you'll only see on late-night Channel Four chat shows – but it's still a rough game in many places.

You'll probably wonder why a couple of sections of road seem to hover a foot or two above the ground. You'll be curious as to why the sound volume goes up and down during cut-scenes. You'll ask yourselves why the player seems to board a boat from about 50ft away when he was previously standing right next to it. You'll question why there are so few multiplayer missions, or why some of the order commands

ORDERING OUT

Command friends and influence people military-style

For most people there's only one online team-combat game of choice. Luckily *Flashpoint* seems to cater for those of us whose *Counter-Strike* skills weren't honed by years of *Quake* and *Doom* training. Multiplayer *Flashpoint* is all about discipline and restraint. You don't go in all guns blazing because you will die. You take cover, you follow your Commander's orders, you jump in a tank if there's one available. Although the game only comes with a bare handful of missions (and only a couple of those are really proper co-op battles) there are already more than 100 online clans waiting to enter the field of battle. We'll go into depth in our online section in a month or two.

You are dead.

You'll still die a lot, but at least it won't be your fault.

With him in charge you've got no chance.

No jumping.

Cut scenes are all in engine.

"Move over."

OK, let's get back to the platoon. The attack is going to start in a few minutes. We have to pick up some men at the camp in Lolisse. Move out.

I want to be... a tree!

Taking out a tank is very satisfying.

---

don't work correctly, or why targeting enemies in tanks is only possible from certain views, or why the doorways sometimes disappear when you go inside a house. And so on.

It's likely that the problems *Flashpoint* has will anger many of

A WAR OF YOUR OWN

The joy that is the mission editor

Christ, what have I let myself in for?

For once we're going to put our money where our mouth is. The mission editor has come in for a lot of praise by me over the past few months, so Richie had the bright idea of challenging me to create my own little campaign. I don't know why I said yes. Maybe it was the gleam in his eye. Maybe it was the joy in his smile. Maybe it was the six pints of Carling with the whisky chasers that had temporarily made me incapable of refusing any challenge to my manhood. Suffice to say, watch this space (or rather the space on the cover disc in a few months time that will contain my finished opus).

you in the same way the bugs in *Hidden & Dangerous* did. Here's my response. Are you ready? I don't care.

As far as I'm concerned, the positives in *Flashpoint* far outweigh the negatives – especially considering that the positives are pretty much everything about the gameplay and the negatives are little more than cosmetic niceties. *Flashpoint* may well be the most under-polished game we've seen, but it's also one of the most ambitious and – if you've come to know anything during your 100-plus issues with us (other than our love of daffodils and Moira Stuart) – it's that we prize ambition over all else in our gaming treats. Set your sights high and you'll earn our respect. *Flashpoint* has aimed very high indeed and, for the most part, has hit its targets.

HAIL TO THE CHIMP

Mentioning *H&D* is perhaps the best way to sum up why *Flashpoint* has received a good review. Despite all of the AI problems, bugs, holes in the floor and texture clipping that the squad-based WWII thinker-shooter had (these genre classifications are becoming more and more specific every day), it kept you coming back, time and again, because it was SDP (So Damn

Playable). The same is true of *Operation Flashpoint*. I can live with the problems because I keep wanting to come back to it. Some of you will hate the multiplayer side of the game but I think it has the potential to be huge (see side panel). If you think there aren't enough missions in the game, the mission editor provides you with

IN PERSPECTIVE

Hard to know what to compare *Flashpoint* with as it's more of a military simulator than a standard story-driven 3D shooter. It lacks the polish and solidity of games like *Project IGI* and, don't laugh, *Hidden & Dangerous*, but has more of a team-based feel than *Rogue Spear* or *SWAT 3*. *Counter-Strike* will still be the online team shooter of choice, but there's definitely the potential here for a more serious multiplayer alternative.

Project IGI

Hidden & Dangerous

Operation Flashpoint

Rogue Spear

SWAT 3

Counter-Strike

all you need to keep going (see other side panel).

Some of you will hate it, there's no getting around that. Most of you, hopefully, will become as absorbed by the atmosphere, engrossed by the gameplay and impressed by the ambition as we are. Try the demo on last month's CD for a sample. *Flashpoint* deserves your attention, a real contender for Game Of The Year if ever there was one. ▮

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Proccessor PII 400 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **WE SAY** Uh-uh. You won't enjoy yourself unless you've got at least a 750Mhz processor and triple-figure RAM. Naturally a good 3D card goes without saying

PCZ VERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Atmosphere is parallel to none • Mission structures are superb • Loads of vehicles • Superb mission editor.

⊖ **DOWNERS** A bit flaky in places • Fairly unpolished despite Codemasters' best efforts.

90

Imaginative, ambitious, original and utterly absorbing

Two heads better than one? Looks like it.

Explosive, without the decompression.

You great big doughnut, you.

Fries with that, sir?

STARTOPIA

⭐ £34.99 • Eidos/Mucky Foot • Out June

Building things in outer space? Who better than our very own space cadet, *Elvis Bacon*. Earth to Elvis…

P icture something like an interstellar town: run-down and empty of intelligent life. This is where *Startopia* would have you apply your management talents to redeveloping a derelict doughnut-shaped space station. A torus, if you want to be technical, a dump if you don't.

You'll have to set about making the place over in every detail, from factories to furniture. As you do so, the station will start to fill up with a wild assortment of alien visitors, some of whom

⊙ G'won, gissa feel.

a matter of keeping the punters happy and healthy so they'll release positive energy, which can then be used to finance your development plans.

There are three decks to work with: the ground floor industrial level is where you stick all the

"You see, you're not God in this god game, you're a civil servant"

you'll hire and all of whom you'll want to keep happy. You see, you're not God in this god game, you're a civil servant. In time, you'll get to research new tech, trade with passing ships, and construct buildings as you tear down intervening bulkheads and take over more segments of the station. But first and foremost, it's

necessities, and that doesn't mean bars or brothels, it means factories, prisons and recycling plants. You need a flourishing industrial level to attract potential workers. The second floor is the Pleasure Deck, which needs little explanation. Here you do build brothels and bars, as well as hotels, clubs, galleries and

anything else that might put a smile on an alien's face. The top floor is the Bio Deck, used for a mix of agriculture and recreation.

You can do this thing mission-style, in which case you get to pit your wits against various scenarios. Or you can do the open-ended 'sandbox' where you set the parameters for a game that can range from potty and fairly harmless Tamagotchi tinkering, to full on and highly competitive empire building.

It's *Babylon 5* crossed with *Dungeon Keeper* or *The Sims*, in an intergalactic *Theme Park*. What a marvellous idea.

HOLD YOUR HORSES
There is one whopping great caveat before we go any further, boldly or

otherwise. This isn't *SimCity* or *Theme Park*. There are no recognisable reference points – the units are strange, the characters and races are strange (although not necessarily barkingly original), and even the basic relationships between trade, people, resources and so forth initially appear utterly impenetrable. You can look at a glowing structure and think 'What the hell is that? Why is it here?' You can look at a purple fronded tentacle thing and just have no idea what it is. In all likelihood, you'll spend a fair bit of time without the foggiest idea of what's going on, feeling frustrated and realising that the finer points are light years away.

Developer Mucky Foot hasn't gone out of its way to minimise this either, with a complex menu and camera system and an interface that insists on discarding convention left, right and centre. There are sections of the tutorial that probably need their own tutorial, while context-sensitive help seems to have gone right out the airlock.

Alien lust object.

Mr Shoemaker, the scan indicates you are about to become the proud father of a baby girl-bot.

You just can't get the staff.

Now there's originality for you.

Bang!

"Me human, you alien stereotype."

It's a 'thing' that does something. Probably.

Forget trying to play a sandbox game from day one, that's all but impossible. Instead, you have to slog through the missions – the first half-dozen or so form a dry point-by-point tutorial. It's worth persevering with if you are the type of person prepared to put maximum effort into a game, but I do find it laughable given how many pompous sermons I've heard from game publishers about 'making games accessible to the masses'.

DON'T WORRY, BE HAPPY

Despite the hurdles in front of you, there is a quality strategy game waiting to be discovered. The missions mostly present pretty specific targets, but they almost always include something above and beyond the call of duty. You'll find yourself sidetracked by suicidal aliens, religious loons and convicts on the rampage, squatters, strange plagues, or cute critters that morph into terrifying vandals you can only get

rid of by conning another station into accepting them as a gift.

This gets taken to its logical extreme in the sandbox mode, where you set your own win requirements and all manner of bizarre circumstances conspire against you as you try to expand across the station in competition with other administrators.

What makes it all the more challenging is that the style of environment you create also dictates the type of visitor you get,

and the underlying tensions. If you want to play a really militaristic expansionist role, for example, you'll need to attract the more warlike races. To get them to drop by and join your cause, you'll want a rowdier environment (and late licensing laws). But that in turn will upset more sensitive visitors, hamper overall happiness levels and development in other, possibly crucial areas. As ever in a god game, there's no perfect solution for pleasing all of the people all of

the time, and as experiments in social tightrope walking go, Startopia is quirky and frequently quite intriguing.

If you can stand the painful beginnings and the awkward interface, Startopia will reward you with a cute but tough and unusual take on the god gaming genre. But don't be fooled into expecting the impact and humour of Dungeon Keeper, or the soap opera familiarity of The Sims. It's good, but it's not that good. PCZ

COMBAT AND MULTIPLAYER

Simple, effective combat in a god game? Yeah right

God games tend to make a complete hash of combat or shy away from it altogether. Startopia's combat is simple yet effective. The business of physically capturing territory from your opponents while maintaining your own security levels doesn't require an Einstein or a Napoleon, but is still fun to set in motion. The fighting involves mustering suitable muppets from the more warlike visitors to your sector, designating targets and sitting back to watch the ensuing mess.

The link to multiplayer Startopia is obvious. At the time of going to press there were – unsurprisingly – no public servers available through the built-in Gamespy tab, but the principles look sound and we'll be revisiting the multiplayer game in a forthcoming issue.

In multiplayer the 16-unit station is divided up between up to three players who then try to expand their empire as far as possible across the station. The goal is to boot the other players off the station, by fair means or foul.

INPERSPECTIVE

Dungeon Keeper is really the role model here, even though it's lost some of its original edge. The Sims is a more down-to-earth alternative. If those don't ring your bell, check into Theme Hospital.

The Sims

Dungeon Keeper II

Startopia

Theme Hospital

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 350 **Memory** 64Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D card **WE SAY** Plays better on a PIII 600

PCZ VERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Much weirdness • Some humour • A decent challenge
⊖ **DOWNERS** Horrible learning curve • Awkward interface

76 Good but not brilliant, and could be a whole lot friendlier

GILBERT GOODMATE

⭐ £24.99 • FastTrak • Out now

Mark Hill is force fed crap jokes in a "new" point-and-click adventure

If I tell you that *Gilbert Goodmate* is a point-and-click adventure in 2D trying to recapture the glories of *Monkey Island*, there's a reasonable chance some of you will get excited and want to know more. If I also add that its subtitle is *And The Mushroom Of Phungoria* and that it comes all the way from Sweden, you'll begin to understand that there's very little to get excited about. The plot should be more than enough to convince you of that. Your grandfather is the keeper of the sacred Mushroom Of Phungoria and is set to be executed after the mushroom is stolen. Needless to say, you have to recover it, and win the heart of the princess in the process.

Gilbert Goodmate is a painfully unfunny game trying as hard as it can to be funny. It isn't helped by

some very out-of-date (by about five years) graphics, some weak jokes and some tired old puzzles. The plot develops without any surprises and there are absolutely no incentives whatsoever to try and solve the next puzzle. The interface doesn't do much to encourage you either, the simple mouse clicks are designed in such a way that you keep bringing up the inventory when you want to look at an object and then spend the next 20 seconds trying to get back to the game.

I like mushrooms as much as the next person, but there are obvious limits to their comic potential. As for the recurring crossdressing-viking theme, I can only assume that it's a source of great hilarity among

Swedes. Shame that it leaves the rest of us gritting our teeth.

For the makers of *Gilbert* this was clearly a labour of love, but you can't substitute talent, quality and technology with good intentions.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Proccessor P166 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** Swedish sense of humour **WE SAY** A P166 is about right

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** 2D point-and-click • Tries very hard to be funny

⊕ **DOWNERS** Fails miserably to be funny • Out-of-date graphics • Poor interface • Dull puzzles

30 About as funny as a plane crash
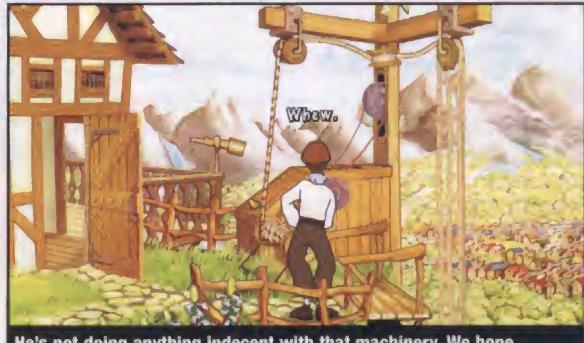
He's not doing anything indecent with that machinery. We hope.
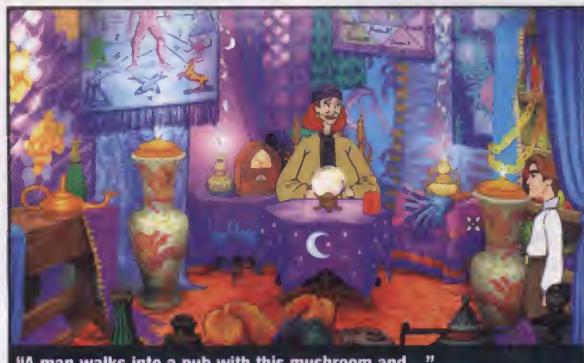
"A man walks into a pub with this mushroom and…"

STCC 2

⭐ £24.99 • Electronic Arts • Out now

You what? *Steve Hill* has the answer

Any guesses? *Sick Toy Clown Club*? *Shrewsbury Town Cheat Conference*? Nope, it's *Swedish Touring Car Championship*, although what happened to the first instalment is anyone's guess. You're probably wondering why on Earth someone would base a game on a little known Swedish motoring event. Clearly, it's because they're Swedish. Developed by Digital Illusions, this is from the same stable as the vintage *Motorhead* and the none-too-shabby *Rally Masters*.

Unfortunately, it's not quite in the same class. It may well be an authentic simulation of Sweden's premier touring car competition, but it's also a trifle dull. The handling is leaden, and it's all too easy to get out of shape and slew off the track into the gravel. Much practice is needed, and for all but the most patient, it's too much like

hard work to get up to the standard required to compete.

That said, providing you don't have any other games, there is plenty to fill your time in here. Elaborate qualification procedures, lengthy championship seasons and all manner of mechanical tweaking are on offer. But can you really be arsed? Do you really have nothing better to do than pretend to drive round a series of bland circuits in places you've never heard of against drivers you never will. Carl Rosenblad, anyone? Hey, he drives a Nissan and the game was developed in co-operation with him. Of course it was.

STCC 2 is by no means a dreadful game, but ultimately it is cursed by the fact that a far superior genre mate exists in the form of the *TOCA* series. Why have mutton when you can have lamb?

A row of Swedes, yesterday.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Proccessor PII 300 **Memory** 64Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 4Mb 3D card **WE SAY** Claptrap. It still jerks like a two dollar whore on a P400 with 128Mb RAM and a 16Mb 3D card

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Plenty of longevity • Seems authentic enough • Modifiable options

⊕ **DOWNERS** Too difficult • Bland scenery • Some Volvos

50 Eventually does your Swede in

These lovely driving gloves offer extra purchase for the serious motorist.

SPACE TRIPPER

⭐ £8.50 • PomPom • Download from www.PomPom.org.uk

Rhianna Pratchett gets spaced out

If I was inclined towards cheap philosophical outbursts I would say that PomPom's *Space Tripper* is a metaphor for the tumultuous ascent of mankind. Dropped onto a strange planet we are essentially alone in the world, with nothing to rely on apart from our wits. We cruise through life growing stronger, wiser and above all avoiding sharp objects. Then, just when we think we're safe, a giant robotic spider drops out of the sky and gives us a quick laser enema. It's the same old story.

Fortunately, I'm not going to say that (*I thought you just did —Ed*), because *Space Tripper* is in fact a damn fine top-down arcade-style retro shoot 'em up. And we like it a lot. Via an overhead view, you fly your little spaceship through 14 levels, which are spread over four worlds, zapping anything that moves and several things that don't. You must pick up various

power ups for your ship's lasers: blue for the not-too-bladdered, show-off shooters and red for the more couldn't-hit-a-teapot-with-an-elephant types. It's vital to remember to power up your weapons as you'll need both types to progress through the game. The red laser is particularly useful for picking off hordes of minor enemies, while your blue laser is better for getting into those hard to reach places.

Despite its simplicity, *Space Tripper* is a tough little mother of a game. Think of a cross between *R-Type* and *Defender*, with some superb visuals and an eye for pixel perfection. You can actually find the demo for the game on our May CD and you can unlock the full game by logging onto the PomPom website and paying for code. It's nothing new, but if you're into retro games you shouldn't miss it – a solid game at a reasonable price... what's the world coming to?

This game's too darn addictive.

Space Tripper will wear out your keyboard.

A good game at a reasonable price? Whatever next?

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Proccessor PIII 400 **Memory** 64Mb RAM, 25 Mb Disc Space **ALSO REQUIRES** DirectX 7 **WE SAY** Does the trick

PCZ VERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Fast paced • challenging and cheap

⬇ **DOWNERS** Too addictive for it's own good • More levels at a slightly higher price would have been better

73 Nifty stuff

EUROPEAN SUPER LEAGUE

⭐ £24.99 • Virgin Interactive • Out now

Steve Hill plays pretend football for money. Again

A bit of a tricky one this. Initially dismissed as unplayable rubbish, a surfeit of spare time allied to an almost perverse degree of professionalism has, some days later, yielded the verdict: vaguely playable rubbish.

It's at times like this we're glad we don't have to buy games. Imagine the scene. You like football, you like football games, and you've had European matches pumped into your brain on an almost daily basis throughout the season. What more could you ask for than a game that enables you to take charge of any of the continent's 16 finest clubs? A game that works perhaps? A game that wasn't a glorified version of blind football? If we'd got back from the shop with this, we'd be absolutely spewing, particularly if we already owned the long-forgotten *Viva Football*, of which this is little more than a

buffed up European version (with England oddly represented by Liverpool and Chelsea).

Despite its lofty pretensions, the player AI is more school ground than European. Defenders will back off a player until he reaches a certain distance, at which point a few of them will lunge in like Roy Keane on downers. Oddly, this can be used to your advantage, as luring the entire defence to the edge of the area before passing to any one of the three or four unmarked team-mates in the area gets results.

Passing to feet works most of the time, although players will sometimes simply turn their back on the ball as if it isn't there. Perhaps they should have fitted a bell on it. With practice, *ESL* does perversely verge on compelling, although the main incentive for playing it is that it's insulting to be beaten by a game so flawed.

What's the matter, never heard of contact lenses?

Ronaldo, before his knee turned to noodle soup.

Do those players know something we don't?

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Proccessor P233 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** PII 400, 64Mb RAM, 16Mb 3D card

PCZ VERDICT

⬆ **UPPERS** Impressively recreated stadia • Real player names • Vague attempt at likenesses • Proper competitions

⬇ **DOWNERS** Questionable AI • Irksome control system • Haphazard shooting • Outdated squads

42 Crippled

Outnumbered and outgunned from the very first encounter.

True line of sight means enemies only appear when your mercs can see them. This B&B could be crawling.

Bad accents all round.

JAGGED ALLIANCE 2: UNFINISHED BUSINESS

⭐ £19.99 • Interplay • Out now

Anthony Holden has unfinished business with Martin for making him play this game

Some games invite you into their world like a long-lost friend, feeding, nurturing and entertaining you – sometimes even encouraging you to stay the night. This one makes you feel about as welcome as a vice cop at an E3 after-party.

A supposedly stand-alone add-on to the popular turn-based strategy/RPG *Jagged Alliance 2*, *Unfinished Business* retains the mercenary squads and B-grade action themes of its parent game while slimming down the resource management. It also seems to go out of its way to alienate anyone who's not a veteran of the series. The game opens with a forlornly dated intro section, in which a character creation option and several reams of background information are cleverly concealed within an unfortunate web/email-style interface. At this stage you're

asked to assemble a team of up to six mercenaries based on their specialised skills, experience and hiring cost. With no real indication of what is required of you in the mission, your decision really comes down to choosing the mercs with the funniest accents, and in this respect you are totally spoilt for choice.

Half an hour of reading and menu-wrangling later, the isometric action begins, dumping your team on an island with a mission to halt a missile strike. Another ten minutes later, they'll all be dead. Unless, of course, you already knew exactly what you

were doing. There's no such thing as a learning curve here – it's a relentless uphill battle from beginning to end, with turn-based combat interspersed with exploration and infiltration. Newcomers will be immediately put off, and the outdated graphics and murky interface offer little reason ever to return.

Jagged Alliance vets may find some gratification here, provided they are prepared for an insane degree of difficulty; but with a true sequel on the way, promising full multiplayer capabilities, *Unfinished Business* is far from essential.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P133 **Memory** 32Mb RAM **WE SAY** PII 300, 64Mb RAM

PCZ VERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** You can import characters from the previous game • Funny accents • Comprehensive level editor

⊖ **DOWNERS** Too damn tough • Linear • Dated graphics

63 A stand-alone that doesn't

CONFLICT ZONE

⭐ £29.99 • Ubi Soft • Out now

Rhianna Pratchett always wanted to be a war journalist, until she found out they wouldn't let her shoot anyone

Bored of the same old harvest, build tank, mount attack, harvest blah, blah, repetition of your average RTS game? Surely if a 3D strategy game is going to appeal to an audience who have had just about enough twatting about with harvesters, then it has to innovate as much as look pretty?

The good guys of *Conflict Zone* are the ICP (International Corps for Peace) and the baddies are the shadowy organisation of GHOST. However, this war is not only waged on the battlefield, it's also fought through the media and the public's perception of the two sides. You must be seen to carry out humanitarian acts like rescuing and protecting civilians, which will increase your popularity and thereby increase your funding. Or alternatively you could subvert the local population

and use them to spy on your enemies. Start rolling out the big guns and blowing up everything you see, and shit creek is your next destination.

The AI of the troops also benefits from some innovation. You can set the response patterns of your units to strict, cautious or aggressive depending on the tactics and firepower needed to deal with a situation. You can also assign different commanders to carry out operations on your behalf. However, the AI of the commanders can sometimes be a little hard to deal with, as they often bugger off and do their own thing – pretty much playing the entire level by themselves with no prompting from you whatsoever.

The 3D camera takes a bit of getting used to, but the game offers selected viewpoints that

cater to most of your needs. The graphics look decent enough from a distance, but blocky up close.

Conflict Zone isn't perfect but it does demonstrate a possible way forward for strategy games, offering something more demanding than a vaguely strategic building set, which more often than not ends up in a big brawl. So prepare for something a little bit different, and don't forget to smile at the camera.

Bright blue hats, very useful in a military situation.

Men dressed as camels, there's a reasonable explanation somewhere.

Somewhere down there is a little Kate Adie.

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor PII 300 **Memory** 128Mb RAM **ALSO REQUIRES** 3D Card **WE SAY** Really needs a PIII, as well as a 24x CD-ROM drive

PCZ VERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Innovative ideas • Good graphics engine • Genuinely humorous cut-scenes • Good AI

⊖ **DOWNERS** The AI can take over • Poor graphics on individual units

70 Some originality at last

OUTLIVE

⊕ £19.99 • Take 2 Interactive • Out now

Dan Emery will outlive us all. Get it?

Innovate not imitate isn't just an overused cliché. It should be the mantra for every game developer out there. Sadly, it seems Continuum ignored this old adage when it produced *Outlive*. The games industry needs another 2D isometric RTS like Cumbria needed the foot and mouth crisis. While the game isn't bad in any places, neither is it any good. Think *Red Alert 2* meets *Starcraft* and you've summed up *Outlive* in one fell swoop. The problem is it lacks the gripping gameplay of either of these grand masters.

The game pits three opposing sides (humans, robots and cyborgs) against each other in an all too familiar 2D environment (any similarity with *Starcraft*, which pitted humans, robots and aliens against each other, is purely coincidental – honest). Lets make no bones about it,

this is a pure 'colour by numbers' RTS that does nothing wrong, but also doesn't do anything particularly well. There's the usual far-fetched plot about a total breakdown of society, and how only you can save the day. There are the same old lists of identical buildings to clutter up the map. And the attempts at humour – calling a unit a Dominator and giving it a sultry strict feminine voice – doesn't just fall flat on its face, it falls down, rolls over and dies.

If computer games were people, *Outlive* would be a chartered accountant. Dull, grey and utterly devoid of anything interesting. No doubt some accountants may be reading this, in which case feel free to write in and prove me wrong. Anything would be better than playing *Outlive*.

Some uninspiring air units in action. Zzzzzzz.

Now I know how General Custer felt.

Would the owner of the green wind generator, registration OLD 2001, please remove it.

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Easily accessible • Runs well on lower end machines

⊕ **DOWNERS** Derivative • Uninspired • Pathetic graphics

50 Life's too short

The Russians now have NKVD infantry – nasty Commie shock troops.
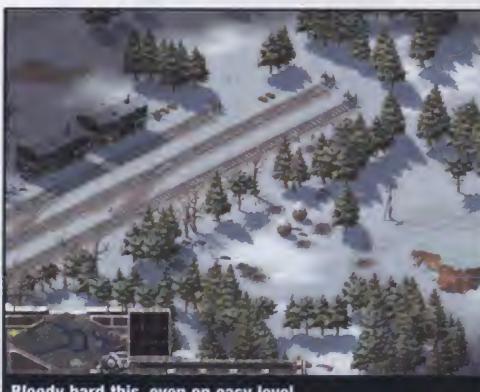
Bloody hard this, even on easy level.

Generals can see for miles.

SUDDEN STRIKE FOREVER

⊕ £19.99 • CDV • Out late June

Sudden Strike is expanding.
So is *Richie Shoemaker*

As far as expansion packs go, CDV is rather proud of *Sudden Strike Forever*. It highlights the fact that against other add-ons, like *Firestorm* for *Tiberian Sun* and *The Conquerors* for *Age Of Empires II*, *SS Forever* (a rather unfortunate contraction) offers an unprecedented number of new units, maps and terrain types over which to fight yet more battles set

during World War II. And if that wasn't enough, for the price of a lamb bhuna, pilau ricé, naan, poppadoms and two pints of Stella, you also get a mission editor with which to create your own stand-alone missions and campaigns. Not bad then.

It helps of course that *Sudden Strike* was something of a cracker to begin with (perhaps, until

Commandos 2 arrives, the best WWII RTS around). Unfortunately this add-on is, forgive the cliché, simply more of the same, good and bad. The excellent interface remains intact, as does the sometimes iffy route-finding. Line of sight has been improved, with a new General unit that can see far away through binoculars. The new autumn terrain is rather messy, while the new desert environments are perfectly suited to *Sudden Strike*'s big battles.

Which leaves the units, which for the most part are insignificant

in gameplay terms, as are the levels themselves, save for the fact you can now choose your difficulty level.

But like the main game, it's the scale of the battles that will draw people back, and here no one will be disappointed. New heavy artillery units, medics and British-only maps help things along, but perhaps more time should have been spent fixing what little was broken instead of churning out new units that will only confuse those still getting used to the original batch.

PCZVERDICT

⊕ **UPPERS** Plenty of new maps and units • New multiplayer modes • Mission editor

⊕ **DOWNERS** AI should've been fixed • Same dodgy music

75 A very good extension of an excellent game

BUDGET ZONE

Because if you look after the pennies, the pounds will look after themselves

⭐ **WORDS** Rhianna Pratchett, Harry Georgiou, Anthony Holden, Dave Woods

MOBIL 1 RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

BEST BUY

⭐ Focus • £9.99 • Out now

PCZONE AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

One of the most graphically accurate rally games of all time, *Rally Championship* features 420 miles of detailed terrain, the likes of which won't be seen again until *Train Sim* is released this summer. Unless you're the sort of person who really likes looking at scenery, this game may well lose its novelty after a time. So it's just as well Actualise has thoughtfully provided you with highly detailed cars and realistic sound effects, not to mention authentic weather conditions.

But fancy effects can only account for so much. The real proof is behind the wheel, and how the vehicles actually *feel* to drive. The handling is pretty arcadey, although you find yourself bouncing all round the track, much like the real thing. There are far too many immovable objects, like bales of hay, which stop your car dead (not one of the more realistic features I hasten to add), but at least your car can get damaged when you hit trees. Overall this is a good value game with plenty seat-of-your-pants action to keep you entertained, especially if you're not into hardcore rally simulations.

PCZVERDICT   **80%**

Coming through...

Mind the gate.

My guess is they're not about to start CPR.
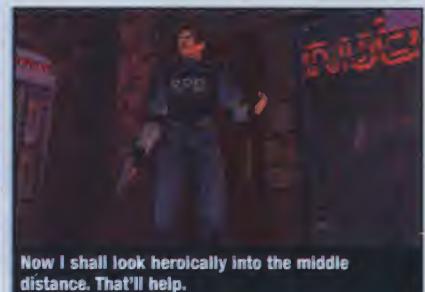
Now I shall look heroically into the middle distance. That'll help.

RESIDENT EVIL 2

⭐ Sold Out • £9.99 • Out now

I lay the blame for the *Resident Evil* games solely at George Romero's door, the man who popularised flesh-ripping zombies with *Night Of The Living Dead*, and ensured that in the depths of our imaginations, our entrails would never be safe again.

Resident Evil 2 is the sequel to perhaps one of the most popular and undoubtedly goriest PlayStation games of all time. You play as either Leon (the Cop) or Claire (the sister of the lead guy from the first *Resident Evil* game) and each character has their own story elements, monsters and new situations to deal with. The story of the two characters running into a town polluted by a virus and neck-deep in zombies, is rather far-fetched, but it's kept in place with a decent script and some gritty storytelling.

Though the graphics are dated it still hasn't lost its edge, and there's no doubt it's one of the most atmospheric games ever, especially if you like to be haunted in your sleep by the sweet, squelching sound of a pack of zombies feasting on your flesh.

PCZVERDICT   **78%**

Looks ominous.

Run away.

RAYMAN 2: THE GREAT ESCAPE

⭐ Focus • £9.99 • Out now

Unfortunately, this sequel does not involve Rayman tunnelling his way out of a German POW camp assisted by Steve McQueen and James Coburn, and the game is all the poorer for it. Instead, this love-it-or-hate-it offering sees the no-limbed Rayman fighting to regain his magical powers and save the world from Razerbeard and his evil pirate gang.

Guide the no-limbed one through the usual old-skool platform levels, bonuses, power-ups and puzzles. Although you can see from its cartoony graphics and daft scenarios that it's aimed at kids, *Rayman 2* is still as damn tricky as its predecessor. The platforming elements may be over-familiar, but it's cute and endearing enough to keep you smiling.

PCZVERDICT   **75%**

HYDRO THUNDER

⊙ Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

If you ever saw my good self playing a racing game you'd never want to get in a car with me. You'd also steer clear of hopping in a boat with me as well, thanks to *Hydro Thunder*. This game, which substitutes cars for power boats, is fun but by no means a perfect racer. A certain amount of suspended disbelief is required as you race round a New York disaster area or a ship graveyard. Your boat doesn't really take much damage, even when you're dodging lava flows, killer whales and plunging down the odd 200ft drop.

In all you have a choice of nine boats, with nine difficulty tracks, plus four bonus tracks for your money. *Hydro Thunder* is purely about speed and agility, although, since half your time is spent in the air, if you are skilled at timing your jumps it might as well be a flight sim too. It's simplistic and highly addictive, eliciting the much-needed adrenaline rush lacking in so many games.

PCZVERDICT   70%

The New York disaster map is particularly good.

Don't buy it if you suffer from sea sickness.

MICRO MACHINES V3

⊙ Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

The gaming equivalent of *Honey I Shrunk The Cars*, *Micro Machines* is a fantastic console game that suffers the inevitable multiplayer fall-out from its PC release. With four players in front of a TV set, *Micro Machines* is utterly addictive, and guiding your miniature vehicles through chemistry sets and pool tables seems completely natural.

On a PC, and due to the fact that it doesn't have Internet options (although

there is an eight-player network if you live in a game-friendly office), the game is reduced down to a simple stroll down memory lane, although for a fiver you can do a hell of a lot worse. One final word of warning – if you haven't got a 3dfx card you're going to have to play in software mode, and it doesn't look pretty.

PCZVERDICT   60%

I can make it, I can make it.

Go get 'em lads.
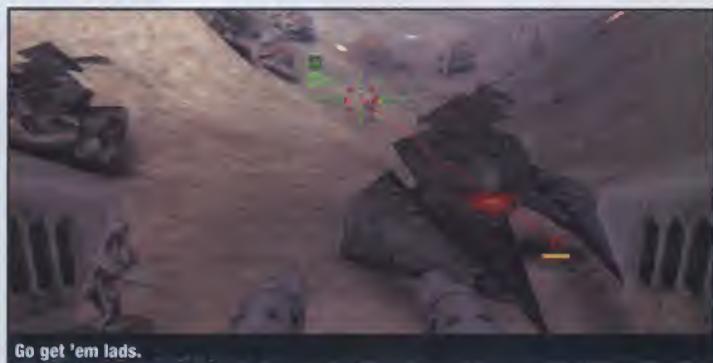
UPRISING 2: LEAD AND DESTROY

⊙ Sold Out• £4.99 • Out now

Like a cheaper version of *Battlezone 2*, *Uprising 2* is a 3D first-person action/ strategy game in which you drive tanks and build bases. It's quite fun, but only for a while. The mission objectives range from destroying convoys to capturing citadels, but you'll soon find that the FPS side of the game is quite repetitive. The Auto Suggestion feature, which allows you to automatically deploy units probably won't appeal to experienced players, but it's handy for beginners.

For the real-time strategy fan there's not a great deal to shout about. Unfortunately, setting your units tasks is often futile as they usually end up doing their own thing. *Uprising 2* is fair value, but if you decide to buy it, make sure you've got a decent graphics card in your machine to ensure you get the most out of it.

PCZVERDICT   60%

Goose.

Iceman.

JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER

⊙ Sold Out • £4.99 • Out now

Three years ago this game aspired to put a futuristic spin on the flight sim genre, sitting you in the cockpits of two real-life fighter prototypes competing for a contract with the US military, with the winning plane set to go into production in the distant year of 2001. Which now means the 'futuristic' air technology can barely pass as contemporary, but the rest of the game can't help but have turned ever so slightly stale.

However, the visual polish of *JSF*, which once shone brightly enough to excuse its ridiculously mirror-shaded

devotees, still retains a respectable gleam. The lack of a training feature is an oversight, especially given the game's high degree of difficulty, and not getting the original printed manual and keyboard reference guide certainly doesn't help matters. But if flying stealth missions at low altitudes and shooting off smart missiles at barely visible enemy targets is your thing, *JSF* is essentially fun and still quite playable.

PCZVERDICT   72%

FEEDBACK

Pure genius or a bitter tasting over-hyped disappointment?
Martin Korda **puts on his knuckledusters and gets stuck into the largest Feedback argument ever**

Some of you love *Black & White*...

BLACK & WHITE

REVIEWED *PCZ* #100, Mar 2001
SCORE 95%

What we thought

"*B&W* is as captivating as it is ingenious. Buy it right now, or miss out on one of the most significant moments in gaming history."

What you said
I LOVE IT...

✪ *Black & White* arrived yesterday morning on my doorstep in its stylish little box. I installed it right away, and watched all the little intro movies with great interest. I own a PII-450 with 128Mb RAM and a Voodoo5 5500, but I was still quite surprised at how jerky it was on full detail at 800x600... so I switched to 640x480 and tweaked the graphics options. It runs fine now, and I must say that even on its lowest resolution it looks absolutely stunning. I got the hang of the game fairly easily, but occasionally I find that the mouse control can be a bit frustrating (cliffs blocking your view etc). That's only a minor problem though, and everything else is just brilliant. The sailors on the first level are obviously the ones who just missed out on Village Idiot status and the animals are immensely charismatic and humorous. So far the game appears to be a masterpiece. Everyone who owns a PC better than mine (not hard) should buy this game now.

Paul Greveson

✪ After reading your review on *Black & White*, I decided to pre-order it as I simply couldn't wait to play it. I eventually got the game on a busy Saturday afternoon, went home, installed it and from that moment on, my life changed. *Black & White* is not a good game, it's the greatest game ever.

The graphics are brilliant, the missions and sub-quests are original and challenging and raising your own animal is a work of genius. I could go on all day about this classic. If you own a PC, then don't hesitate to play this game. A word of caution though, *B&W* will keep you addicted and may effect your social skills.

JJ

✪ So, the best PC Games mag recommends it, but is *Black & White* really worth coughing up the princely sum of £35 for? Naturally, the answer is yes. And if you lack an extra £35, then go and apply for a job cleaning public lavatories. Undoubtedly one of the best games of all time, the graphics are lush, the gameplay involving, and the creatures intelligent. Being a fan of no-brainer FPS games and being crap at *AOE2*, I wasn't so sure about buying it. However, it has converted me and now I have seen the light. If there's any justice in the world, then soon Peter Molyneux will become Sir Peter Molyneux. Travel down to your nearest electronic entertainment centre now.

Marc Vincent

Good game, bad game!

...some of you think it's great, but not without fault...

...and some of you just hate it.

IT'S EXCELLENT, BUT...

✪ Lets face it, we were all fearing that *Black & White* might be crap. So now it's here, what's it really like? Well to put it quite frankly it's utterly amazing but that's only about three-quarters of the story.

The extraordinary AI of your creature is almost negated by the appalling AI of your little men. For example, if they want new homes, they won't go out and take wood to your workshop and build some, they sit round and moan and wait for you to do it. But the most surprising thing about this game is that despite its flaws, you still find yourself playing for hours on end just to see what happens. So as you say, it's "genius". Somewhat flawed genius, but genius nonetheless. After all, there can't be much wrong with a game that lets you be a god and have a dancing monkey as an assistant.
Will Stevens

✪ Since buying the game I have played it for about ten hours it's already obvious that it has lived up to the hype and delivered just about everything that we were all expecting. The creatures are wonderful, the lands are beautiful, the control system is intuitive and the spells are excellent. But there is something wrong. Maybe it's the annoying villagers who never stop demanding things. Maybe it's the amount of time you have to invest in conquering somewhere new and the fact you have to constantly feed your worshippers. Maybe it's the overly jerky

graphics, or the awkward Temple save game feature. I know none of these things should stop me playing, but they do. I can't blame the developers – they've created a great game, but it's not one I could honestly recommend.
Peter Gummerson

> ## "Undoubtedly one of the best games of all time, the graphics are lush, the gameplay involving and the creatures intelligent"
> **MARK VINCENT ON *BLACK & WHITE***

I'M DISAPPOINTED

✪ Was there ever any doubt about *Black & White* receiving 95 per cent in your review?

Is it possible that you gave it this score because of the incestuous relationship you have with Lionhead?

If you check out the official forums you will find a whole bunch of disappointed customers, who expected something more from the game than simply picking up objects and then putting them down again.

The amount of micro-management is nauseating, making the game a real chore. If you were an all powerful deity, would you want to waste time

➲ "What did you just say about B&W?"

picking up food from fields and putting it in a container? Or would you expect the damn humans to do it for themselves, instead of just sitting on their arses?

Black & White should have been all about huge spells, epic battles, Armageddon, all those sorts of things. Instead it's a game to be endured rather than enjoyed. What a bloody disappointment.
John

✪ I'm aware that you cited "Takes time to get into" as a downer in your review, but how can a game whose first two levels are as repetitive and patronising as *Black & White*'s receive 95 per cent? Wouldn't you agree that the inability to grip the gamer is a pretty serious flaw? All your other classics are instantly playable and immersive. Playing *B&W* I found myself doing the same things over and over again. And how many times do you need to watch a monkey fart? Maybe if you're 11 years old...

I'm hoping it'll get better but I'm running out of patience. I must say that on the plus side the creature interaction is excellent and I do feel like I'm building up a sort of kinship with them. However, the miracles disappointed me – there's not a lot of variety – as did the combat, which isn't exactly exhilarating. I also think the movement interface is unnecessarily tricky, especially

to begin with. What's wrong with a *Ground Control* type camera?

I'm not writing *Black & White* off, but I'm disappointed that you gave it a higher score than *Deus Ex*, which I worship. Graphically *Deus Ex* is at least as good, but more importantly it has reference points that you can relate to your own experience. That's why the moral dilemmas that you wrote about work so well. In *Deus Ex* you operate in a world of immediate consequence, so the decision over whether or not to despatch an enemy is a very personal one. But in *Black & White* the consequences are a lot less tangible and as I'm clearly not a god with a huge dancing monkey following me around, I don't particularly feel any pangs of guilt if I toss a dozen or so ungrateful mortals into the nearest ocean. Graphically it can be mesmerising, but as you always say, the balance between eye-candy and game-play is a crucial one.
Matt Weaver

Comment

Never in the history of Feedback have we had so many letters about one game. Your views have been extremely varied to say the least, so we've tried to print a good balance of opinions just to be fair and all that malarkey.

On the whole, most of you love *Black & White*, and of course we're in complete agreement that it's one of the finest games ever made. Graphically it's incredible, and nothing can touch it in the originality stakes. Since the review, however it has come to our attention that there a fair few bugs in the game as well. Keith noticed a few minor ones while

reviewing it, but has since run up against more serious examples. A patch is on the way and should be available by the time you read this. Expect to see it on next month's cover disc as well.

John and Matt, you're two of several dissenters who wrote to us, complaining about the game. Fair enough, you're both disappointed with it, but is it because it's actually poor, or because you were expecting something totally different? John, you say that *Black & White* involves little more than picking things up and putting them down again, but that's not completely fair. As an open-ended strategy title you should get out of it what you put in.

We all have different tastes, and if you didn't like *B&W* then it's probably because it's not your type of game, not because it's a poor one. With all the hype that surrounded it, it's more than likely that many of you who don't even like RTS games have bought it with false expectations, and ended up disliking it as a result of its heavy strategic slant. Remember, it may be hugely original but it's still fundamentally a strategy game. The huge amount of micromanagement is caused by your villagers being a bunch of dumb arses who constantly need to be spoon-fed. Some of you enjoy this and some of you don't. In hindsight it's a bit of a shame that Lionhead didn't include some kind of adjustable village self-management system to help out those of you who aren't too keen on this side of the game.

We lavished so much attention on Lionhead because we firmly believed it had something special in *Black &White* not because we have an incestuous relationship with them (unfortunately, no sexual favours whatsoever were offered to bribe us), and we feel the end result justified our faith. You should know by now that we never give a game a high mark just because it's surrounded by hype, look at *Emperor: Battle For Dune*, *Diablo II* and *Daikatana* if you need any proof of that. If you think *Black & White* is repetitive and boring, perhaps you would be more at home with a first-person shooter. PCZ

STEREO.

CREATIVE® SURROUND SOUND.

ONLINEZONE

PC GAMING FOR THE MASSES   www.pczone.co.uk   #4   JULY 2001

ONLINE REVEIW

TRIBES 2
Team-based action to rival Counter-Strike?

PREVIEWED

WWII ONLINE: BLITZKRIEG
Fight them on the beaches, through towns and across the skies

BETA REVEIW

COSMIC RIFT ONLINE
Space combat retro-style

PLUS! DEUS EX MULTIPLAYER · WORMS WORLD PARTY · NEOCRON · SERIOUS SAM
· SHADOWBANE · IRONSQUAD · FRAG*BALL · D-DAY NORMANDY · FOG · QUAKE III FORTRESS

CUT & PASTE

If imitation is the highest form of flattery then *ONLINE ZONE* must be doing something right. Since starting our online gaming section a year ago, we've had a tremendous response from readers and developers. In the past four issues, since we upgraded to the new 'mini-mag' style, I've noticed other PC games magazines have copied the format, even to the point of scoring games – and mods – out of five. Although rather unimaginative on their part, at least it shows that us print magazines are united behind the fact that online gaming is big and sure to get even bigger.

But there are some that seem confused. I'm not going to name names, but one publisher in particular was perplexed that we were less than impressed with one of their games in our regular *PC ZONE* reviews section, but then followed it up with a respectable four-star rating in *ONLINE ZONE*.

I'm quite sure none of you have such problems differentiating between the two. In *PC ZONE* we review the full game, even the multiplayer game if we can (usually across our office network). But here in *ONLINE ZONE* we want to take things further. We'll take the game online for a real road test, because as anyone will tell you, in many cases, when a game is reviewed before release, the multiplayer servers are hardly ever ready.

Well I hope that clears things up, but if anyone still has any questions, feel free to drop by our Online Gaming chat forum at www.pczone.co.uk. See you next month for all the big online gaming news from E3.

Richie Shoemaker
Online Editor

CONTENTS

HOW WE SCORE ONLINE GAMES

You'll notice our Online scores are out of five. This is partly to avoid confusion with scores in the main *PC ZONE* reviews section and partly so we don't have to decide between giving a mod 63 or 64 per cent, plus it looks nice. Five stars means great, and one doesn't. It's pretty simple really.

PCZVERDICT ☑
★★★★★ Excellent
★★★★☆ Very good
★★★☆☆ Decent
★★☆☆☆ Not bad
★☆☆☆☆ Bad

Steve Hill and his very best chum – Flintanvil Steelheart.

SHADOWS OF LUCLIN
EverQuest goes off-world

It seems rumours of a full-blown *EverQuest* sequel were unfounded as Verant, developers of the popular online role-playing game, announced a third add-on, which was on show at this year's E3 show in LA.

As seems to be de riguer, *Shadows Of Luclin* will introduce a new playing area, various graphical updates, exclusive new spells, items, treasures, monsters and a brand spanking player character. Unlike the last add-on however, *The Scars Of Velious, Luclin* is aimed just as much towards new players as old, as both those whose youthful jowls are covered with downy white bumfluff and the more experienced floor-length beards can start in a new city, set far above the lands of Norrath on an orbiting moon – which could pose a few public transport problems.

EverQuest: Shadows Of Luclin is due for release this winter, until which the official website www.everquest.com/luclin should keep your beard in trim.

LAWSUIT OF THE RINGS
Legal dispute dogs Tolkien role-player

Seemingly in production for years, but never actually announced, was Sierra's online RPG based in Tolkien's Middle Earth. It was to be called *Middle Earth*, then in September 1999, the development team was laid off (about the same time as the cancellation of *Babylon 5*, incidentally) and the game fell further into obscurity. But with the big publishers all clamouring to put out an official *Lord Of The Rings* game – on the back of the film trilogy, which is currently in production – an online RPG is back on the cards. Who was making it was something of a mystery though, until now.

It now transpires that Sierra is involved again. Since early last year, developer MM3D has been working on what it calls *Tolkien Online*, a game originally scheduled to be released this summer. Things haven't gone smoothly however, since the developer has filed a lawsuit against Sierra (it all comes down to money, basically), which at best will delay the game, at worse, scupper it completely.

The good news though is MM3D and Sierra are talking things through face to face as well as through lawyers. On the developer's website (www.mm3d.com) it states: "We have enjoyed a good relationship with Sierra in the past and we would like to enjoy a positive relationship with them in the future." So it's not all bad.

Hopefully, when both parties kiss and make up we can look forward to what will be the first official Middle Earth game, based on Tolkien's books. At a guess, the game is unlikely to appear in the next 12 months.

There is no official website yet (www.middle-earth.com seems to have disappeared), but you can find out more about the film by visiting www.lordoftherings.net.

Left: furry toes. Right: furry jowls.

NEOCRON

Online RPGs get a shot of FPS action

As much as some quarters persist in evangelising massively multiplayer as the future of PC gaming, many of us will not be enticed by such life-consuming endeavours until several developments take place. The first, obviously, is for the form to break into new generic pastures, away from the predictable and hirsute worlds of fantasy – and more recently, space trading – in which it is presently mired. Another is the introduction of the kind of cutting-edge graphical standards that we are accustomed to seeing every day in bouts of first-person action and engine revving. Both *Anarchy Online* and Sony's forthcoming MMOFPS *Planetside* promise to make advances in this direction, but potentially even more exciting is Reakktor Media's futuristic 'virtual city' project, *Neocron*. Blending elements of FPS and RPG and boasting a state-of-the-art 3D engine, *Neocron* could be the kind of online environment to finally tempt a clean-shaven demographic away from their real-life jobs and loved ones.

One look at the post-apocalyptic metropolis of Neocron and it becomes clear that the developers have taken no chances with the look of their world, and there is no avoiding the horribly predictable *Bladerunner*

66 There is no avoiding the predictable *Bladerunner* comparisons: hovercars, animated billboards, incessant rain 99

comparisons. Hovercars, animated billboards, incessant rain and Rick Deckard namechecks illustrate just how blatant the borrowing from that sci-fi benchmark truly is. However, while disappointingly derivative in its generic influences, *Neocron* appears set to create a convincing virtual environment that is at once familiar and incredibly appealing. This is helped in no small part by the lovely graphics engine, capable of handling all the dynamic lighting effects and high-poly environments of current-generation FPSs.

Played entirely in the first-person and set in and around a totalitarian super-city, *Neocron* allows you the choice of four starter classes: Tank, Private Eye, Spy, and Psi-Monk. From these starting points you are free to choose your path in the game, be it an ordinary law-abiding existence as an unassuming citizen, or the pursuit of any number of dangerous professions. As a bounty hunter, hacker, thief or merchant, you can cheat and kill your way up through the social ranks, provided you are not caught and killed by the patrolling Copbots. A *Black & White*-style system of good and evil also operates – the more people you kill the darker your SoulLight becomes, eventually leading to eviction from your cosy city apartment and exile to the non-moderated areas of Pepper Park or the monster-strewn Outzone. Only by killing those more evil than yourself or by donating funds to charity can you regain SoulLight and re-enter civilised society.

The RPG elements of the game will be lighter and less intrusive than in other online RPGs, but it's still possible to play the game as a pure RPG if desired – training your character, completing quests, solving puzzles and so on. Currently in the early stages of beta testing, Neocron already looks brilliant, and has the potential to take the genre to new heights. Perhaps massively multiplayer is the future after all. Check www.neocron.com for more details.

Reakktor promise continual expansion and improvement of their new world.

Good old-fashioned carnage in the Outzone.

William Gibson is just one of the million influences.
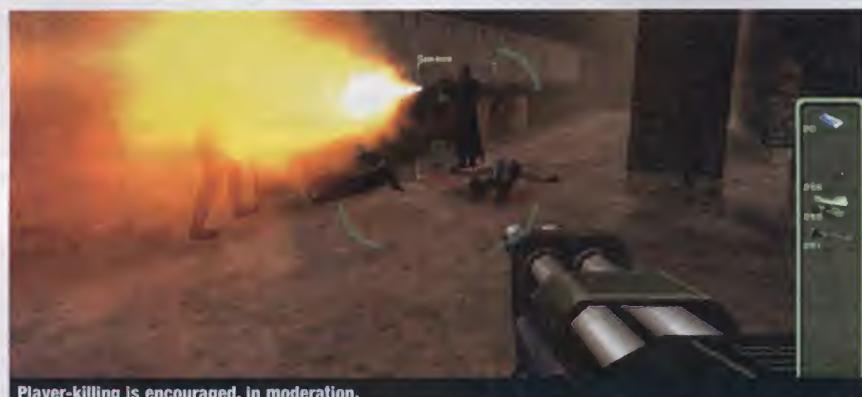
Player-killing is encouraged, in moderation.
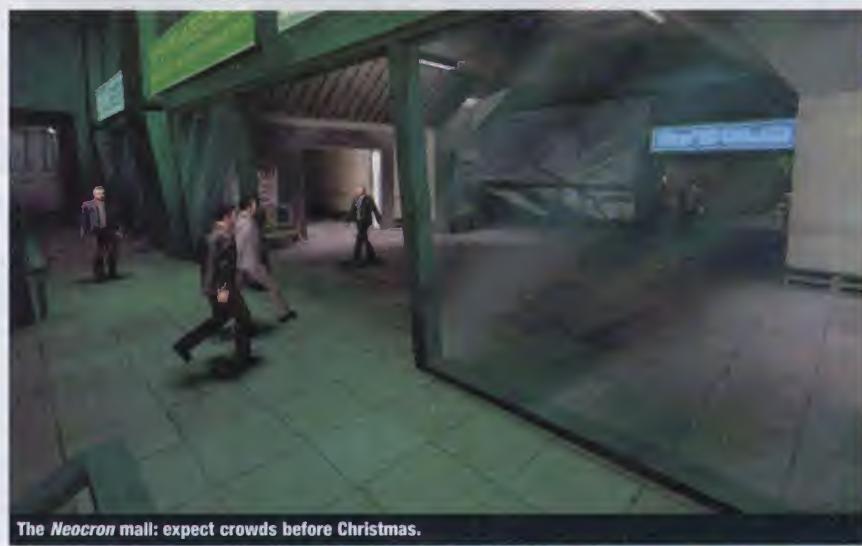
The *Neocron* mall: expect crowds before Christmas.

"Look out! There's a bees nest in your crotch. "

"My dad was Red Rum, don't you know."

SHADOWBANE

Gather round for the latest online RPG

A source of comedy for many, a lifestyle for others, the fantasy genre is if nothing else incredibly resistant to change. If you accredit this to the richness of the subject matter rather than a lack of imagination among goblin-lovers, you'll be pleased to hear that there's a new pretender to the *EverQuest* throne on its way – WolfPack Studios' forthcoming MMORPG *Shadowbane*. Currently in the early stages of beta testing, *Shadowbane* takes place in the dark world of Aerynth, and looks set to trot out all the usual fantasy conventions. However, it does attempt to distinguish itself from the competition by tossing some elements of strategy and wargaming into the cauldron, offering advanced players the ability to form guilds, engage in political intrigue, build fortifications and cities, lay siege to enemy strongholds, conquer territories and eventually rule entire kingdoms. A greater depth of player interaction is thus encouraged, taking the genre beyond traditional RPG questing and item-swapping. If going to war isn't your thing, you can treat the game as a standard character-based RPG, though with its newbie-friendly level-upping system, *Shadowbane* is unlikely to be the most hardcore of its ilk.

Possibly the most progressive element of the game though, is the way its servers are being set up. Instead of having many identical "mirrored" game environments hosted around the world, each of *Shadowbane*'s server-clusters will represent one fragment of the world of Aerynth, torn asunder in some ancient calamity. Each portion will offer a unique feel and flavour; one may be largely forested, another an Arctic wasteland, and so on. Your character will be able to travel freely between the different world fragments through magical portals. If *Shadowbane* can capitalise on innovations such as this it could make its mark, though whether the already well-serviced market can support another fantasy-themed persistent world waits to be seen. Check out **www.shadowbane.com** for more info.

A few familiar names in the *QIII* Top 20 – none of which work for *ZONE*.

It has pie charts and everything.

COMPUTER SPORTS GOES PUBLIC

Start ranking furiously

The Computer Sports Network (**www.csports.net**) has reached its milestone beta testing stage. The technology, which tracks player names and ranks them within a huge worldwide database, has been in development for two years and since teaming with Gamespy (**www.gamespy.com**), is sure to grow into the most complete and comprehensive site for gamers eager too see where they are in relation to other gamers.

At the moment there is support for a huge list of games, though, we suspect most will be curious to see where they come in the *Counter-Strike* rankings. We looked up the *PC ZONE* players and found us all hovering between the 300,000 and 700,000 mark – which isn't too bad considering we only play online every two weeks or so and there are 11 million *CS* players worldwide.

IRONSQUAD

Real-time strategy from the top down

The rise of online gaming seems to have had an unforeseen and welcome side effect – injecting new life into an otherwise flat-lining bedroom coding scene. Creating a full-scale single-player experience may be out of reach for penniless indie developers, but there's huge potential for simple multiplayer-only games, designed purely to facilitate strategic online play. And when it comes to strategy games, the simplest premise often gives rise to the most complex strategic possibilities. Just look at chess... or *Counter-Strike*, its contemporary bedfellow. The three-man team at Gigantic Games have gambled the last four years of their lives on this theory, living hand to mouth, designing webpages to pay the bills and developing their first game – team-based strategic actioner *IronSquad*.

Currently in public beta testing, *IronSquad* takes its inspiration from one of the most fondly remembered online-only games – the ancient *Star Trek* strategy *Netrek*. No fond memories? Well, it was a bloody long time ago, but *IronSquad* aims to take the best elements from such online classics, namely simplicity, addictiveness and open-ended strategic potential, and make them look good. It's essentially a tank-based battle for resources, played between two teams of up to 16 players, the aim being to capture enemy buildings or strongholds and thereby take control of their territory. Played in top-down 3D, the interface is split into a combat screen, tactical world map and communications window, where team chat scrolls continuously. Six basic vehicle types work in conjunction with defensive towers and an impressive array of refittable weapons. Add a few likeable features such as tractor beams and cloaking devices, and *IronSquad* starts to look rather interesting. The final product isn't expected to go live until late 2001, but in the meantime check out **www.ironsquad.com**.

In development for years and ready at the end of this one, hopefully.

Looks like lightning is forecast... and spanners.

ACE OF ANGELS

Halo, what's all this then?

With *Jumpgate* soon to go live and Westwood's *Earth & Beyond* on the way, the future for space combat games is looking a lot brighter than it was a year ago, especially since the promising online space game *Ace Of Angels* has just hit the first stage of testing.

Spilt into three phases, the *Ace Of Angels* Battlezone mode is currently being put through its paces, offering simple arena-based deathmatch play with 14 varieties of spacecraft to pilot across an asteroid-rich arena which, we're told, stretches from the Earth to the Moon.

The second stage, scheduled for the end of the year is The Outerchange, which will bring a degree of continuous play, with bases and capital ships introduced, updated AI-controlled craft and mission-based play.

Finally, early next year the full Campaign game will be added, which will introduce the story of the Known Spheres (full details at **www.flyingrockllc.com**), with eight races to play as wars rage across the universe. More than any other online space combat game, *Ace Of Angels* aims to introduce social and political elements to the gameplay, with player organisations exclusive to certain races. The ultimate effect being that huge interstellar wars will at last be a possibility, rather than the pathetic dogfights we are used to at the moment.

Low-res textures mean more ships on screen.

Hide in craters and asteroids.

One for *Wing Commander* fans perhaps?

Don't panic, don't panic...

WWII ONLINE

WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

- Strategy and persistent universe combined
- In real time
- Maps out the entire world
- Unique combat zones and associated weaponry

CV

CORNERED RAT SOFTWARE
Only two things come from Texas...

1999 Out of the ashes of the *WarBirds* team, Cornered Rat emerge

2000 *WWII Online* is shown, offering a complete online war simulation

2001 Extensive beta testing begins... Let play commence

What? First-person action, strategy and simulation? All online! Who do you think you are kidding, Mr *Dan Emery*...

While persistent universe role-players such as *EverQuest* and *Ultima Online* continue to boast over 80,000-100,000 users during US evenings, it's no surprise that other companies are looking to the Net as a nice little earner. And while games such as *Anarchy Online* are going head-to-head with the old established giants, others are taking a different view. A group of Texans down in Grapevine have decided to mix the most enduring children's game (playing at war) with every adult's favourite toy (the Internet). The result? *World War II Online*.

Unlike every other WWII sim out there, *WWIIO* doesn't do the usual Americanised version of history (that WWII started when Pearl Harbor was attacked). In fact, for the initial release, America is out of the loop entirely, as the first part will be spanning the period 1939-1940 in what was known as the Blitzkrieg (see 'On The Real Blitzkrieg' boxout). Not only is it a virtually unique period for a PC game to use, but at this point in the war, the two sides were historically fairly evenly matched (Germany had a superior air force, France the best army and

Un tank français.

French soldiers. Armed, suprisingly.

Squads are already forming.

Those who aren't of a simulation disposition, will like the on-screen radar.

the British Navy still ruled the waves). This means that the game can go either way, and dependent on the players, history could actually be rewritten. But what do the players actually do?

Well, *WWIIO* is more a first-person shooter/ hardcore strategy hybrid. Although these would seem unlikely bedfellows, stay with us, as it does make sense. Kind of. Now, when you first dive into the game, you're just a regular grunt, and you're sent to the front with your trusty rifle to do battle. Obviously you will be able to select your national allegiance and the service of your choice (land, sea or air), but once you sign the dotted line, off you go. All the combat is done in first-person mode, so think *WarBirds* meets *Counter-Strike* meets *Quake*. On a giant scale.

Assuming you survive combat (or at least limp away with enough limbs to fight another day) then you get experience points (think RPG, kind of). Build up sufficient experience points and you get a promotion. Just like the real armed forces, but without the 4am starts, acts of random violence and mountains of unpeeled potatoes.

Earn a couple of stripes and not only will people start to call you 'Sir' and hate you for it, but you also start getting control of the strategy side of the game.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Now, remember when you first logged in and were sent into battle? Well, once you start pulling the strings, it is up to you to decide where gets hit, and with what. Airborne assault behind German lines? Massive Panzer thrust on

yourself demoted back to the ranks, and you'll have to work your way back up all over again. Sleepless nights here we come.

RADIO GAGA

At present the game is still in closed beta, so many of the strategy elements have still to be added. There are still big issues with the radio chatter, as during a large battle every man and his dog is trying to call for help or radio in the enemy positions. Quite how the radio will be filtered remains to be

> ❝Earn a couple of stripes and not only will people start to call you 'Sir' and hate you for it, but you'll also get control of the strategy side of the game❞

Paris? As you gain rank you start calling the shots. But fame is short-lived. If your escapades start costing lives or even the war, you will find

seen, but at present there is an overload of information at times.

The developers have also had to scale back the size and scope of

"Anyone know how to fly this thing?"

Play dead. Oh, he is dead.

Objectors might like to stick to driving others about.

Thankfully, the weapon models will be updated.

operations (at least for the initial release). The Naval units and campaigns will be released about three months after the game first ships (excuse the pun). However, Cornered Rat software has made it very clear that this will be a free upgrade, so worry ye not.

PC, and graphically doesn't come close to the likes of *IL-2* and *WarBirds III*. Then again, *EverQuest* doesn't come close to *Quake III* or *Counter-Strike* graphically and people still lap it up, so it's a moot point.

WWIIO is going to be epic. Bigger than epic. But it is going to

> **❝Just like the real armed forces, but without the 4am starts, acts of random violence and mountains of unpeeled potatoes❞**

BIGGER AND BETTER

The game has vast scope for expansion, and it is likely that Africa and the Eastern Front will be next on the wish list, along with all the associated weaponry, closely followed by the war in the Pacific. On the flipside, the game has been developed to run on both Mac and

need the numbers online if it's going to work properly. Based on the number of registered users on the BBS (more than 30,000) however, we don't think this will be a problem. A ground-breaking game on the Internet has long been overdue. *World War II Online* could be its finest hour. PZ

ONLINE PLAY

GANG WARFARE

You're never gonna win on your own, Rambo... so check out these websites for a helping hand or two

KAMPFGRUPPE WIKING
http://kwiking.hypermart.net/
One for the Germans. A *Kampfgruppe* consists of 20-160 men in armour (and supporting troops). Fast assault and lightning attacks are the order of the day. So, if jumping into five tons of Krupp steel excites you, it's a good group to join. The site also has good historical info on the real Kampfgruppe Wiking.

http://soe.wwiionline.com
The Special Operations executive is a tongue-in-cheek site looking at the lighter side of the game. Although the site is hosted on the Playnet site, all the content and design is player and not company driven. Once the game ships, there is potential for some real missions behind enemy lines to be organised. This is the place to go if you fancy some black ops.

Hilarious. Well done.

http://www.blackknightbrigade.com
The Black Knight Brigade is a combined forces British group that encompasses the 111th RAF Squadron for air support, the armour unit from the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, the infantry from the Scots Guards and support units based on the 104th (Essex Yeomanry) RHA (Royal Horse Artillery). One thing that all the front-line forces need (apart from luck) is ammunition and fuel, which isn't really in abundance, so any group that can also provide back-up logistical support is going to be good. A great British site.

1er RPIMA-FRANCAIS
http://perso.wanadoo.fr/buckaro/1er_rpima
This is probably a really good site. However, as no one here speaks a word of French, it's anyone's guess. But seeing as the French are one of the three main sides in *WWIIO*, we've included it here. Even if they did come runners-up in World War II.

QUICK BIT OF HISTORY

ON THE REAL BLITZKRIEG

Um, can I borrow your boat?

Blitzkrieg means, literally, 'lightning war'. Unlike the British and French, the Germans had learnt some hard lessons after the four-year static slaughter that marked WWI. After the invasion of Poland in 1939 there was a period of uneasy peace, commonly referred to back then as the 'phoney war'. Very little activity took place, and life was almost the same as it was before war was declared. All this changed in May 1940. Hitler launched an attack on the neutral countries of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. The elite French and the majority of British forces rushed up the coast of Northern France to try to save the Dutch, straight into a trap. Unknown to the Allies, Germany had massed a large force of tanks and troops in the Ardennes Forest, who then thrust straight into the middle of France, splitting the defence into two. By the time the Allies realised it was a trap, things had reached the point of no return. Fighting a desperate rearguard action, the British and French tried to regroup with the main forces around Calais, but to no avail. Eventually, the British realised that the situation was unattainable, and evacuated over 300,000 men from Dunkirk, losing almost all their heavy weapons and equipment in the process. The French carried on fighting for another two weeks, but the situation was lost. France was defeated in six weeks, and it would be another four years before any part of France would be free from occupation.

Guinness is good for you.

It's a beauty.

Improvised comedy.

Hopefully *WWII Online* will expand into other theatres of war.

Hiding in a bunker. It could be French.

And from above.

Close-knit teams are essential, as well as effective command.

"Squad A will go here, here and here, while B will go here. Then back for tea."

You can't find the spares anywhere these days.

Q&A

RODNEY 'HATCH' HODGE

With more questions than answers, we held Rodney 'Hatch' Hodge at rifle point to find out how World War II Online is shaping up. Following a lengthy interrogation, we got more than just his name, rank and number.

PCZ The game is in closed beta at the moment. When will it go into public beta?

HATCH All being well, we are aiming to get a release a few weeks after the E3 expo. So hopefully mid-June.

PCZ Last time you spoke to us, there were lots of ideas floating around about players having more strategic control: picking targets, assigning resources, that kind of thing. A year on, how has this progressed?

HATCH The mission system is in, and we're adding pieces of that at a time. First there's just missions, then there's points for the missions, then you start getting ranks from the points. That's where we are right now. I'm not sure if it will be complete before public beta, but it will be in before the game ships.

PCZ You've also changed the commercial model. Originally the game was going to be a free download and then pay-per-play in the same way as *WarBirds* and *Aces High* operates, but the rumour mill now says that it will be a boxed commercial release. Any truth in these rumours?

HATCH Well, we are going for a commercial release, and it will be boxed and then flat rate per month, in the same way that *EverQuest* or *Ultima Online* is. The publisher for North American and English-speaking territories is Strategy First. The long and short of it is, we've already gone the *Aces High* route and although it was a nice start to get the game going, it didn't have the impact on a massive scale which the others have shown with a retail release.

PCZ The last preview we did focused mainly on the land and air side of the game. How are you progressing with the game's naval aspects?

HATCH We've touched a bit on the models, but we haven't put them in yet. That's scheduled to be added 90 days after the commercial release.

PCZ So this is going to be released separately as an add-on pack?

HATCH Yes, but it will be a free download. All of the weapons and kit that you could use in the Blitzkrieg theatre will be in the game, and if it's not in the commercial release you will get it for free as soon as we do it. The add-ons that will be sold as extension packs will be other theatres.

PCZ So you'll have all the different types of French aircraft, British tanks and so forth before moving on to the next area?

HATCH Hmm...

PCZ Lots of online games are getting the player base to develop models and skins. Is this something Playnet will be encouraging?

HATCH There aren't any plans to do that right now. Roger (our art director) is a perfectionist, and while I've seen some good models out there, he feels that there is too much of a liability if they're not under contract. But this might change in the future. Personally I think it's kind of cool.

PCZ What do you feel is the best aspect of the game?

HATCH The first thing that comes to mind is the immersion factor. It's hard to describe. The only other time I got this was from an offline game. You remember in *Half-Life* when you busted out from the facility, and there's a helicopter buzzing around, and the troops are shooting through the fence at you? Now throw in shells flying around, tanks and shit. Here, everyone you see is another person. That's where we're at. You can be cowering in a ditch, and all you hear is the sound of a tank rumbling closer and closer, then it stops and you stick your head up to see what's going on. And he's right on top of you, making you swear out loud. It's just immersive as hell.

The main screen is customisable and quite similar to *Infantry*.

No graphics accelerator required. Can't you tell?

The Chaos Zone variation is basically deathmatch in spaceships.

Action is frantic but sometimes hard to find.

COSMIC RIFT ONLINE BETA

⭐ Free • Sony • Out now • http://cosmicrift.station.sony.com

Ever wanted a multiplayer game of *Asteroids*? This is it – and then some, says *Phil Wand*

Think of Atari's 1987 *Blasteroids* arcade cabinet crossed with the more recent *SubSpace*, and you've pretty much got *Cosmic Rift* summed up. Add in Sony's massively multiplayer game engine, capable of supporting online arenas with up to 200 people in them, plus some 13 different types of craft and a number of game styles, and you'll have some idea of how huge the game could be.

The Chaos Zone variation of play reigns supreme, with Seek and Destroy following close behind in the popularity stakes. The former allows players to buddy up with 70 other people and join a monster galactic fracas where everyone is a viable target – deathmatch in space. You can either opt to join existing teams, or form your own with friends or colleagues on the office LAN. The latter variation is a simple but addictive permutation of Capture The Flag, where participants are rewarded for picking up flags and keeping hold of them – the idea being to be in possession of the most flags when the time runs out.

Thanks to Sony's Station software which hooks you up with the game server and sorts out any patches, new variations can be added by the developer at a moment's notice, and many more are planned for release some time in the summer.

Right now, though, *Cosmic Rift* is deep in its beta stage and the people behind the code are more interested in feedback on the existing play styles rather than introducing new ones.

66 There's a great deal of satisfaction to be had from barrelling up on someone unawares and blasting them apart 99

So don't go expecting a finished product, because you won't get one. When we played the game, there were a number of annoyances which – fingers crossed – might just be fixed by the time you read this. Crucially, the game refused to run at all on our Windows 98 ME system, generating a big blue screen in place of the main menu, and on both Windows 2000 and NT 4.0 numerous error boxes spoiled what was otherwise a very smooth ride.

Graphically, although the latest OpenGL whistles and bells are absent, the product looks superb at anything above 640x480 (it goes right up to 2048x536). Gameplay more than makes up for it, and the fact that you don't need a graphics accelerator or some fancy version of DirectX to play doesn't really feature. Each ship has more than 60 directional frames of animation – rotation isn't *quite* as smooth as vector-driven variants of yore, but it's close enough.

Playing online with people you don't know is always a treat, especially so when you're winning. There's a great deal of satisfaction to be had from barrelling up on someone unawares and then blasting them apart like they were . an *Asteroids'* rock. Our only criticism here is that there really aren't enough people to go round: often you'll be coasting through the vacuum with little to do other than spin round in circles. This will of course change as the game gains popularity, but it's impossible to say how long that will take. 🖾

Nice pear.
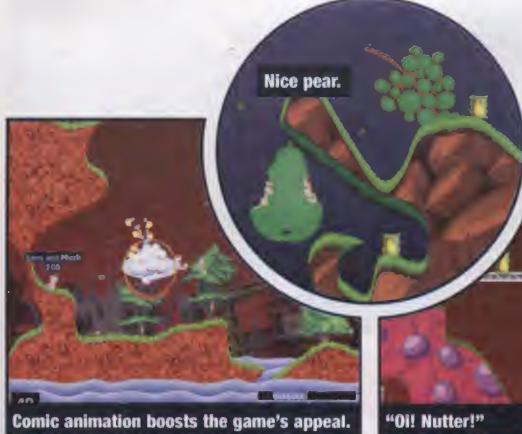
Comic animation boosts the game's appeal.

"Oi! Nutter!"

The weapons cabinet is full of silly toys.

No shortage of visual creativity.

WORMS WORLD PARTY

⭐ £19.99 • Virgin • Out now • www.globalworming.net

Has *Worms* passed its sell-by date?
Phil Wand opens a can of them

Ain't no doubt, *Worms* can be fun. Team17's little pink squirming things have made their mark on every gaming system since they first appeared on the PC back in 1995 – the idea of invertebrates trained in warfare and the martial arts being as seductive as it is stupid. Wriggling your team around the screen, bombarding your opponents with ludicrous weaponry while trying desperately not to flick yourself off the map, was a real bundle of titters. Although *Worms World Party* brings an antique concept into the 21st century by focusing around network multiplayer, it still looks and plays like every ancestor. "But it's wonderful when you're pissed!" you cry. "Great at parties!" Well, so are doner kebabs and ugly birds. After four pints, the most repulsive ogre looks like Izabella Scorupco. Two more, and even Richie starts to look attractive. Let's be clear: one of the factors influencing a review is that it must give you a twang in your pants, *when you're sober*.

The main problem, aside from one of the most unintuitive interfaces we've seen, is that *Worms* remains tediously, depressingly, *glacially*, slow. Getting your worm in the right place, flicking through countless weapons, and then nudging his aim up and down, puts a pressure cooker strain on your cardiovascular system. Having to wait for 18 other people to do the same thing – many of them in the advanced stages of inebriation – is racking torture. The only other option is to play against the computer and, as with previous instalments, artificial players are always balls-on accurate and no bloody fun. Sure, there's a level editor and a truck load of new ideas and gameplay styles, plus new training modes and missions, but if you've played *Worms* before (and we're darn sure you have) this one is all froth and no beer. ▣

It's that Crisp Anderson again.

You're toast mate!

DEUS EX MULTIPLAYER

⭐ £29.99 • Eidos • Out now • Patch from www.deusex.com

Richie Shoemaker slips into his leather jacket and shades and lines up with the other lookalikes

Like *System Shock 2*, *Deus Ex* was never really meant to be played as a multiplayer game. It is to the credit of Ion Storm that it saw fit to face up to what is perhaps the only true criticism of what is without doubt a modern classic, by releasing a multiplayer patch to appease the online masses.

Unfortunately, unlike the patch that was released for that other RPG classic – *System Shock 2* – this *Deus Ex* add-on is a far from co-operative affair that allows teams to play through the single-player game towards a common goal. Rather, it offers a more traditional platter of deathmatch and team deathmatch action. Which is both a good and bad thing.

First the good. One aspect that has been carried over from the single-player game is the Augmentations. A bit like traditional RPG skills, Augs are what you spend experience points on in order to increase your chances of hacking into computers or firing weapons. Contrary to what you might think, this aspect translates superbly well into a fast-paced deathmatch environment, offering dozens, if not hundreds, of gameplay options over and above having quick reactions and an itchy trigger finger. The more frags you accumulate and the less you give away, the more Augs you have access to and in team deathmatch games, the greater tactical awareness required in choosing your skills.

Although there are numerous ways of achieving your goals, your aims are but one – to kill. Unlike *Counter-Strike*'s bomb diffusal or hostage rescue missions, or *Unreal*'s Domination and Capture The Flag levels, *Deus Ex Multiplayer* suffers from a lack of variation in game objectives. If there were a computer each team had to hack into, or a civilian under house arrest that one team must assassinate or escort to safety, there would be enough here to court Counter-Strikers away from their screens. As it is, it seems Ion Storm is content to just start the ball rolling, hoping that in time the mod makers will come up with something better. Which they will. They always do. ▣

"I need your clothes, your boots and your motorcycle."

TRIBES 2 V22460

⊕ £28.99 • Sierra • Out now • Updates from ftp://ftp3.sierra.com/pub/patches

The bad things have gone and the good things are even better. *Wandy* books a room at the *Tribes 2* addiction clinic

Tribes was born to be online. It's slick, quick, and virtually lag free. It puts evolutionary demands on old-skool deathmatchers, forcing them to co-operate with their team mates. It provides players with a number of vehicles that add a new dimension to strategy, but without disrupting gameplay. Even if you don't like it – even if you can't stand the thought of it on your hard drive – it remains a landmark for first-person shooters and a point of reference for many rivals.

Tribes 2 is more of the same. If you read our review last issue you'll know that there are more vehicles, more maps, more weapons and a medley of new features that'll have existing fans pitching a tent in their boxers. As a single-player game, it's on the sucky side of average, but hey – that's not why you bought the box. You handed over your hard-earned cash for one of the most dazzling multiplayer experiences on offer. Get into a game where the people know how to play in synchrony and you'll be instantly, hopelessly lost in that inexplicable other-worldliness for which *Tribes* has become famous.

FIGHTING FIT
Try and put aside any negative thoughts you may have about the first game. The new weapons are very gratifying, meaning you'll be actively looking for a fight instead of stumbling into one unawares.

Other new features include a browser, mail client, discussion board, chat room and news area. If you're used to gathering your clan on IRC to organise a squad and set dates for matches, *Tribes 2* understands and soothes your pain. It incorporates all the functionality you need to keep your team in tow, and when people around you leave to join a game, you have the chance to click on a link and follow them. No more begging for IP addresses. You

> ❝The lush visuals are a country mile away from the stale cheerlessnes of their predecessor and the interface is a joy❞

The lush visuals are a country mile away from the stale cheerlessness of their predecessor, and the interface is a joy. Our only complaint is that the server selection page – perhaps the screen you'll visit most often during your *Tribes* addiction – is about as useful as a screen door on a submarine.

soon begin to realise that someone, somewhere, has spent a lot of time thinking about what team gamers want from their team games.

A BIT OF AN ISSUE
Niggles include the fact that the *Tribes 2* code has been bug-fixed once a week since

release – we're talking megabytes of patch code to download here, not a swift, ten second update – and even then, Dynamix has yet to sort a number of serious 3dfx issues. Two of our Voodoo machines chug through maps at such an appallingly slow rate you'd think you were watching storyboard stills rather than a cutting edge 3D engine. From what we've read, Dynamix has been rather dismissive of these problems ("3dfx cards are destined for the trash can," or words to that effect), so try before you buy if possible. **PCZ**

PCZ VERDICT ☑

⊕ **UPPERS** Much improved visuals • Online play still smooth • Fun

⊖ **DOWNERS** Needs teamwork • Major 3dfx problems • Still buggy

⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐

Get a decent team together and you'll be here forever

All aboard. Feet on the seats, please gentlemen...

The Browser shows detailed information.
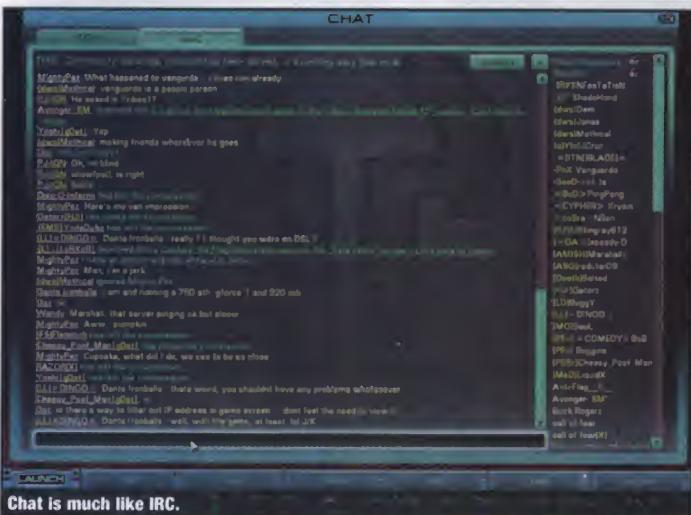
Chat is much like IRC.

Phwoar, now that's a blast.

You'll need as much help as you can get.

Probably the best weapon in the game.

No less than a man in a vest deserves.
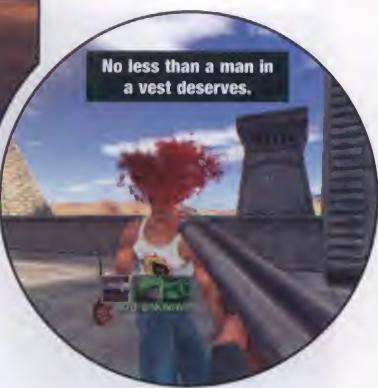
SERIOUS SAM V1.00C

⊛ £29.99 • Take 2 • Out now • www.serioussam.com

A game that's serious by name and a joker by nature. Unlike _Richie Shoemaker_, whose real name is Mike Hunt

'll bet that most of you who went out and bought _Serious Sam_ (overpriced that it was) completed the game in the same day. There really wasn't that much to it once you got over the hilarious suicide bombers and dozens of enemies racing towards you at every turn.

Unfortunately, there isn't much to the multiplayer game either. OK, so there's a four-way split-screen mode, which isn't only useless but irrelevant for the purposes of online gaming.

Neither are there that many maps. As many of you will have discovered already, there is only one deathmatch map – which although may be fun for the full complement of 16 players, is rather flat for a duelling couple. Luckily, there are already a number of DM maps available to download (from www.3dactionplanet. com/serioussam/maps.shtml) with more to follow, no doubt on a daily basis.

Where _Serious Sam_ impresses us most is the co-operative multiplayer game. Up to 16 can join forces and play through every single-player level, and in that alone, _Serious Sam_ is immense fun, almost as good as the fabulous _Half-Life_ mod _Sven Co-Op_. Watching laser fire shoot across the open landscapes towards giant boss-creatures really is a sight to behold and, unlike the single-player game, worth playing more than once. The good news is that by the time you do get bored, thanks to the efforts of developer Croteam, _Serious Sam_ should soon have itself some impressive mods, dozens of which are in development – including a _Starship Troopers_ mod, which is so suited to the _Serious_ game engine that it may well end up as good as the game it's based on.

Unfortunately, even with the recent patch, with such large maps to wander through _Serious Sam_ is something of a fat bloater when it comes to bandwidth, and to get a decent game in you really do need at least a cable modem. Though perfectly acceptable, the weapons are a disappointment in multiplayer games too. Where both _Quake III_ and _Unreal Tournament_ require skill to wield their most devastating weapons, _Sam_'s comedy canon requires luck and blind faith. That said it really is rather refreshing to have a deathmatch game that is played for laughs rather than a high score.

PCZVERDICT ☑

⬆ **UPPERS** Co-operative play is fun

⬇ **DOWNERS** Laggy via 56K modem • Only one DM map provided • Basic weapons

★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

Could have a bright future

The houses have plenty of detail, although they all look pretty similar.

Anyone for Chess!

Tatiana Lewis, Florence

Samuel Clemens

Each mystery can take around two weeks or more to solve.

FOG

⊛ £24.99 (includes three episode tokens, £5 for each subsequent token) • Cryo • Out now

• www.fogmysteries.com

Could point-and-click adventures have found salvation online? _Mark Hill_ conducts the inquiry

hodunnit. It's an ugly word, but it manages to sum up a whole pulp fiction genre led by Agatha Christie and played out constantly in rubbish TV series. It also manages to sum up _Fog_, the first ever online adventure game. Solving puzzles with other people makes sense, and most adventure players will already have spent whole days sitting in front of the PC with a bunch of friends trying to get Guybrush Threepwood to use objects in his inventory in the unlikeliest places.

Set in Victorian London, _Fog_ recreates a Sherlock Holmes and Jack The Ripper-type atmosphere. You belong to a select crime-solving club, called upon by Scotland Yard to help in their investigations. You begin the game in this club, from where you can select one of the mysteries available, meet people and join a team of snooping amateur detectives. To make the game a true team experience, you can choose from four types of characters, each one with special abilities: a scientist, a lawyer, a journalist and a medium. Every team needs at least one of each sort (for example, only the lawyer can brush for fingerprints and only the journalist can access certain documents).

The mysteries themselves are intriguing and really do take a team effort to solve. Play consists mostly of opening drawers and trying your icons on absolutely everything rather than logic and rational deduction, but then that is the nature of most of the great adventure games we know and love. The first-person view shows up the engine for the slow, clunky beast that it is, but it does serve its purpose in allowing you to explore the 3D environment fully. If you have the patience, _Fog_ makes a nice change from goblin-bashing.

PCZVERDICT ☑

⬆ **UPPERS** First decent online adventure game • Lots of detail and information

⬇ **DOWNERS** Too slow • Standing around looking at things can become quite tiresome

★ ★ ★ ☆ ☆

A sophisticated online Cluedo

MODWATCH

Tony Lamb gets minted with the latest freebie add-ons

Jumps in *Conundrum 2* have to be pixel-perfect – it's a long way down.

Some enemies are easier to defeat than others. Like this one.

CONUNDRUM 2

★ Requires full version of *Half-Life* • **www.planethalflife.com/conundrum**

Conundrum 2 is a single-player mod for *Half-Life* that will challenge all but the most experienced. The developers have taken elements of *The Crystal Maze*, *Fort Boyard* and some half a dozen different puzzle shows (though not *Countdown*, unfortunately) spun them all in a blender with generous helpings of painful death and then thrown the whole concoction into a *Tomb Raider*-style adventure.

Every kind of puzzle, from pushing around building blocks to sequential jumps over chasms are featured, and even in so-called 'Easy' mode, the game is a lot more difficult than you would imagine as jumps have to be pixel-perfect and timed to perfection. Just to liven things up, there are, of course, a few varied human and Xen enemies ripe for blasting, although not enough to slow you down.

We could go into the storyline, such as it is, but it's totally unoriginal and really rather unimportant. Unfortunately, though there are some good ideas here, the central idea – one of first-person platforming – doesn't work too well. There is a reason why *Tomb Raider* is a third-person game, after all.

PCZVERDICT ☑
- 🔼 **UPPERS** Novel • Damned tricky at times
- 🔽 **DOWNERS** Not that much action • Graphical glitches

★ ★ ☆ ☆ ☆

First-person platforming never works

QUAKE III FORTRESS BETA 1H + USER INTERFACE PATCH

★ Requires full version of *Quake III Arena* • **www.q3f.com**

Beta 1H is the latest update for this great *Quake III* clone of the popular *Half-Life* mod *Team Fortress Classic* and is an absolute must for any *QIII* library. *TFC* purists might argue that the *Quake* engine isn't suitable but the *QIIIF* team continue to prove them wrong – this mod is fun!

The format of the game is standard *TFC* with teams battling to rack up the points in either Capture The Flag, Command Point or Capture and Hold scenarios. Each team is made up of various classes; medics heal their team or infect enemies, snipers kill anonymously at long range and heavy gunners stomp around with a bloody great big gun and blast everything in sight. Achieve a spread of classes and genuine co-operation between team members and you're on to a winner!

QIIIF continues to look good, and although not as slick as the *Half-Life* version, is a must for any true *Quake* fan.

QIIIF maps are cool, but can be a bit big.

PCZVERDICT ☑
- 🔼 **UPPERS** Familiarity • Good maps • Looks fantastic
- 🔽 **DOWNERS** Some dodgy animations • Harder to master than *TFC*

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

An essential *Quake III* download

Quake III Fortress is the maddest, baddest *Fortress* clone of them all.

ARG! V1.0

⭐ Requires full version of *Half-Life* • www.planethalflife.com/arg

Revisiting *Arg!* is like eating seafood in the full knowledge that last time led to hallucinations and a total loss of control of bodily functions. This is quite possibly the weirdest and, for some, the funniest *Half-Life* mod yet and if you don't mind average graphics, a terribly short supply of servers and the occasional bug then you're in for a bit of a treat.

Billing itself as 'The pirates strike back', *Arg!* is a team deathmatch mod where each team is allocated its own specific weapons. These include throwing daggers, farts, an Instagib broadsword, a fishing rod, whisky bottles and an evil toucan. Work that one out for yourselves…

Classes in *Arg!* are just as bizarre with the obligatory Pirates doing battle with equally badly drawn Holy Drunks, Leprechauns, Skeletons, Ballerinas and Night Fever Warriors (a fearsome bunch who sport afro haircuts from hell). Maps are few and online servers even fewer, but this doesn't stop the team pressing ahead with the maddest *HL* mod yet.

Game reviewer in Bikini Babe/Rod in Hand shocker… again.

It's *Arg!* Where else could you smack a llama with a whisky bottle?

PCZVERDICT ☑
⬆ **UPPERS** It's maaaaaaaaaaaaaad
⬇ **DOWNERS** Next to no online support • Not one for a whole evening
----
⭐⭐⭐✩✩
An acquired taste

FRAG*BALL V1.1 ALPHA

⭐ Requires full version of *Unreal Tournament* • www.planetunreal.com/fragball

One thing's for sure about *Quake III* – hat fashion isn't its strong point.

*Frag*Ball* is a superbly enjoyable football-style game where your objective (do I really need to explain this?) is to get the ball into the opposing team's goal. It's up to them to stop you, kill you, steal the ball back and get it into your goal first. Weapons are the standard *UT* fodder and health and ammo packs are left in plentiful supply to guarantee some seriously frantic action. *Frag*Ball* also has some very cool maps, which vary from low-gravity sci-fi layouts to ancient temples. Map sizes vary too, with a

couple big enough to make the sniper rifle a valuable tool. Others are so small you'll barely have time to catch your breath before the action starts.

PCZVERDICT ☑
⬆ **UPPERS** Top fragging action • Great maps (and more at the website!)
⬇ **DOWNERS** Not many servers • Limited 'mission' appeal

⭐⭐⭐✩✩
Fast and fun but not very popular

D-DAY NORMANDY BETA 3

⭐ Requires full version of *Quake II* (Patched to 3.20) • http://dynamic.gamespy.com/~dday/site

Quake II mods are something of a rarity these days so seeing one going strong is welcome indeed. *D-Day Normandy* is a World War II environment, class-based mod (a style familiar to the hordes of *TFC* fans) with each class of soldier having its own weapons, strengths and weaknesses. However, *D-Day* has a whole lot more going on besides. For a start, there is a campaign structure to the mod, which means that as the Allies and Axis powers slog it out, the focus of the game shifts as one or the other gains the upper hand. This, alongside the already tried and trusted format makes for a more involving experience than the

standard fight-change map-fight game. The maps in *D-Day Normandy* are well designed and definitely evoke the period atmosphere. The various different classes look good too and their weapons are lovingly modelled. If you've got *Quake II*, get this mod for sure – it's tops.

If you're that badly outnumbered, you can always try praying for help.

This mod shows that *Quake II* can still keep up with today's big hitters.

PCZVERDICT ☑
⬆ **UPPERS** Very involved maps • Familiar style • *Quake* action!
⬇ **DOWNERS** Graphics a bit dated • Not much online support

⭐⭐⭐⭐✩
***Quake II* lives!**

COMING SOON ❓✖

FRONT LINE FORCE

Living in the *Half-Life* world and aiming to beat *Counter-Strike* at its own game, *FLF* is a squad-based shooter that combines great maps with superb gameplay, accurately modelled weapons and the proven goodies vs baddies formula that has made *CS* itself so popular. Version 1.2a adds even more features and can be found at www.flfmod.com.

HOW POPULAR?

In the online server Grand National courtesy of Gamespy.com, it's no surprise to see bookies favourite *Half-Life* several furlongs in the lead with 10,643 servers, *Quake III Arena* limping in second with 2,681 servers, *Unreal Tournament* just a nose behind in third with 2,641 servers and *Tribes 2* struggling along in fourth place with 796 servers. The rest are nowhere to be seen.

GLSETUP UPDATED

GLSetup is not a mod but a useful tool for mod players who want to get the best out of their Voodoo, GeForce or ATI video cards. It's a utility that automatically detects what type of 3D card you have and makes sure you are using the right drivers. The latest Beta version – 1.0.0.121 – is now available, and you can find out more on www.glsetup.com.

MOO ARENA

This mod for *Unreal Tournament* makes up for the shortage of cattle in the British countryside by featuring little else but our bovine friends. *Moo Arena* is its name, multiplayer cow mayhem is its aim… and it's crawling ever nearer to release as we speak. Check out the skins (none of which are charred) at www.planetunreal.com/mooarena.

READERS' CHALLENGE

You wanna step on Shoemaker, hack down Woods or slaughter Korda? Well, now's your chance

Well it had to happen sooner or later. The mighty *PC ZONE's* winning streak at *Counter-Strike* came to a somewhat tragic end, at the hands of the mighty Clan Evil. Weakened by the loss of our two star players, Maqua and Leatherface, we drafted in two last-minute replacements, our new news editor Anthony 'Shokupan' Holden and freelance designer David 'Yes Sir, I Can Boogie' McCormack, and set about defending our reputation as the masters of *Counter-Strike*. Clan Evil had other plans though, and quickly set about a massacre of epic proportions, winning four of the five

maps and drawing the other. Since this tragic defeat, the entire team has been in a state of shock, staring serenely into their monitors and taking a long hard look at themselves. However, two weeks and several thousand pounds of therapy later, we've bounced back and are eagerly awaiting our next opponents. After all, we've got a rep to protect, or at least we've got one to get back.

The scores were as follows. Militia (*ZONE* as Ts): draw 2-2. Assault (*ZONE* as CTs): won by Evil 8-0. Assault 2K (*ZONE* as Ts): won by Evil 10-0. Office (*ZONE* as Ts): won by Evil 7-4. Dust (*ZONE* as CTs): won by Evil 11-2. Many thanks and congratulations to Clan Evil who win some fantastic Razer Mice. Their teamwork was outstanding and they thoroughly deserved their victory.

THROW DOWN THE GAUNTLET

Pick one of these games and send your challenge to us at **letters@pczone.co.uk** (with *PC ZONE* Readers' Challenge in the subject heading). *Counter-Strike*; *Quake III* (*Arena*, *Rocket Arena* or *Jailbreak*); *Unreal Tournament*; *Half-Life*; *Virtual Pool 3*; *Age Of Empires II*: *Age Of Kings* (four-a-side);

A lack of teamwork, not kills brought about our demise.

RAZER
BOOMSLANG™

FREE-FOR-ALL

The Playing Fields

18 June 2001

9:00 – 11:00pm

FREE-FOR-ALL

Unreal Tournament/Counter-Strike

C&C Red Alert 2 (four-a-side); *PGA Championship Golf 2000*.

We need your clan details (website, name), two daytime phone numbers and two email addresses, so we can contact you. Only send us a challenge if you're sure you'll be able to get a team together and keep to the date that we agree with you. Also, make sure you all have access to a machine that allows you to play the chosen game online.

TO THE VICTOR GO THE SPOILS

If you win – without a hint of cheating, of course – we will give your clan between four and six (depending on your team size) Razer Boomslang 2000 mice. They're worth £69.99 each and are probably the best gaming mouse around, it'll give you an edge no matter what game you're playing.

PC ZONE Free-For-All `?` `X`

GETTING CONNECTED

Get ready for some hot fragging action

Not in the main challenge? You can still get your arses whipped by joining the free-for-all. To join our *Unreal Tournament* server, click the 'Multiplayer' tab in the top-left menu and then select 'Open Location'. Type in '195.149.48.59:7777' in the box provided, hit enter and then when prompted for a password, type in *pczone*.

To join the *Counter-Strike* FFA, from the opening *Counter-Strike* menu click 'Play CS' then 'Internet Games' and 'Filter'. Check the box for 'Are In My Favourites List' and uncheck the other boxes.

Now click 'Filter' again, and click 'Add Server' then type: '195.149.48.59:27016'. You should now see a server called 'PC Zone Challenge' listed on your screen. Double click on this server to join it. The password is *pczone*.

Servers will be available for practice from 12noon. Maps will cycle every 15 minutes to allow everyone a chance to play, so keep trying. If you have any problems connecting, telephone 020 7388 0004 on the day of the challenge.

HAVE A GO `?` `X`

PC ZONE GAME SERVERS

Provided by www.games-world.net

The *PC ZONE* game servers are now more popular than ever and to ensure only *PC ZONE* readers can play on them, we've decided to password them all. Don't worry though, every month we'll be printing the password you need to get fragging.

Quake III: Arena Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.24.27966
Quake III: Fortress Public Server #1 - 194.93.134.24.27968

Counter-Strike Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.49:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.49:27020
Counter-Strike Public Server #3 – 194.93.134.51:27015
Counter-Strike Public Server #4 (*PC ZONE* map pack)
– 194.93.134.51:27020

Unreal Tournament Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.52:7787
Unreal Tournament Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.52:7777

Team Fortress Classic Public Server #1 – 194.93.134.50:27015
Team Fortress Classic Public Server #2 – 194.93.134.50:27020

Password: Reaper

✪ L to R: Richie 'Hard-Pumping Action Man' Shoemaker reviewed *Project IGI* (*PCZ* #97, 85%) Martin 'Van Damme' Korda loves explosions. Mark 'The Matador' Hill reviewed *Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force* (*PCZ* #84, 84%), *Clive Barker's Undying* (*PCZ* #101, 85%) and *Gunman Chronicles* (*PCZ* #97, 87%). Steve 'Look How Big My Gun Is' Hill reviewed *Half-Life* (*PCZ* #71, 95%). And 'Crispy' Chris Anderson loves to smoke and tries his best to keep them all under control.

PCZSUPERTEST
SINGLE-PLAYER
FIRST-PERSO

First-person shooters have grown up. If only the same could be said of the *ZONE* team, to whom *Chris Anderson* reluctantly presents a vast array of deadly weaponry and then runs for cover…

"I only asked if someone could give me a light!"

PHOTOGRAPHY Simon Clay

SHOOTERS

PROJECT IGI

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

SERIOUS SAM
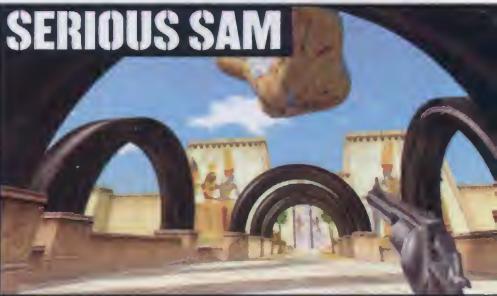
HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

GUNMAN CHRONICLES

First-person shooters seemed at one point to have stagnated to a degree where only major releases in the genre were greeted with any kind of enthusiasm. Every new game of this type wanted to be *Quake* or *Half-Life*, and each of them in turn failed miserably to match up to the classics. Recently we have seen a new breed of first-person shooter. Games that require tactics in addition to sharp shooting skills are appearing more regularly, and while the genre's typical traits (shoot, kill, run a bit, shoot, kill, repeat etc) are still evident in most recent releases, we are finally beginning to see more innovative titles that stand out from the crowd. The games in this month's Supertest all display a different approach to a tried and tested genre in their own way (with the obvious exception of *Half-Life*, which, for its part, set a new benchmark for all others to match up to upon its release). We put each of these games through their paces and went in search of an overall winner.

However, this month's Supertest is slightly different, as it includes our game of the millennium (*Half-Life*). In the process of pitting all these new pretenders to the throne against such a heavyweight, we are also evaluating how the genre has changed and evolved. *Half-Life* was revolutionary when it was released, can the latest batch of first person shooters match or overtake the leader of the pack? Turn the page and find out…

→

Project IGI excels in wide open areas.

"That'll teach you to spy on me."

"I've got them right where I want them."

PROJECT IGI

Steve: I played it for a while and it seems like a good game, but I couldn't get through the missions, I kept getting killed. Eventually I just stopped playing it because you can't save during the missions. It's commendable in its innovative use of ladders, but mostly you're just doing the same stuff over and over again.

Martin: If you're 10 seconds away from the end of a mission you've played for the last six days and you get killed, it pisses you off.

Chris: If it takes you so long to end a mission, you've got problems anyway.

Martin: OK, so I might have exaggerated a bit, but you know what I mean?

Steve: You should be able to save your game anytime you like. What if someone comes to the door? What if you have to leave the house and you don't want to leave your PC on in case it starts a fire? It's irresponsible. If you want to be a bit stupid about it and save whenever you like you should be able to do it.

Mark: You should be able to at least save once, maybe at a savepoint halfway through or something.

Chris: Richie you're the only one who's played this game all the way through to the end. How big are the missions in later stages? How frustrating is it without a save feature when the missions get more difficult?

Richie: If the save feature was there I definitely would have used it, but it didn't bother me that much. I never wanted to leave my house mid-mission.

Steve: The point is, if you get killed you have to go through the whole thing again and it's just not worth it.

Mark: That's the way the game's been designed. They've made it really hard, so you have to play through the missions, get to know the layout, die and start again knowing what you're doing, getting a bit further each time.

Steve: They only did that to make it seem longer. I'd have about five goes on one mission then just go and play something else.

Richie: It's one of those games you die five times in, get pissed off with, then go and make a coffee or something. Half an hour later you're thinking about having another go at it.

Chris: It's a good enough game to make you want to keep trying to get through the missions. I really liked it, and a lot of games use trial and error gameplay and nobody complains. I think people have just gotten used to saving all the time and it's made games too easy.

Martin: It's a completely different kind of first-person shooter. Generally when people think of first-person shooters they think of aliens chasing down a corridor in a mapped level. It's not like that, it's not a traditional first-person shooter. It plays differently. Saving all the time would make it too easy.

Chris: I suppose some people might have gone out and bought Project IGI thinking it was a standard first-person shooter and been disappointed.

Martin: It depends what you're after. If people want a game that makes them think, they won't be disappointed.

Richie: It's not the ultimate first-person shooter, but it gives most of the ones out there a good thrashing.

Mark: The engine's a bit strange. It's not one that lets you run around shooting and strafing and avoiding things. The pace of it is a bit slow. You can't jump through windows for example, it has some really odd things like that in it. I came to a bit with a small window and a desk and wanted to jump through the window but you can't

> ❝The engine's a bit strange. It's not one that lets you run around shooting and strafing❞
>
> **MARK ON PROJECT IGI**

do that, you have to walk around and find the entrance.

Richie: The buildings are weird too, they all seem to have the same layout but it's still a great game, good weapons and stuff.

Mark: The appeal is definitely in the really big open areas. They concentrated on that rather than things like jumping through windows.

Chris: Tell us more about the ladders Steve.

Steve: I like the ladders. When you get on one you can move up and see your character and just sort of look around.

Everyone: (laughs)

Steve: Well, if the scenery's there you might as well have a look at it. You can even stop halfway up the ladder and just peruse your environment. It's like a live cut scene.

Richie: Yes it goes into third-person action mode whenever you're doing something that isn't critical and won't get you shot in the head or whatever.

Mark: There is one good reason not to play it however, and that's the main character. He's the most annoying twat I've ever seen in a game.

Richie: He's not as bad as the guy in Undying. He's much worse.

Mark: No way he's much worse than the guy in Undying.

Steve: It's a close one. I found him irritating, even in the cut scenes he's going 'don't tell me what to do'. It's his whole attitude. He's just a ridiculous character.

Martin: I like the game though, I thought it was OK.

Steve: Don't over-commit yourself.

Martin: It's not all about just waiting for hordes of aliens to come at you. You have to track people down.

Richie: There's not much variety in the characters. All the people you kill look the same, some bloke with a red beret on his head, and I think all through the game I only saw two tanks and one helicopter, but it's still a great game.

PROJECT IGI

There are many reasons to like *Project IGI*. It has huge outdoor areas that make a nice change from the often claustrophobic corridors that are typical of this genre, and its thoughtful approach to mission design will come as a breath of fresh air to many gamers. But the action can be slow compared to other games.

ORIGINAL SCORE	85%
DEVELOPER	Innerloop
PUBLISHER	Eidos
REVIEWED	PCZ #97

Don't just stand there, shoot him.

Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force is the only game in this Supertest you play with team mates.

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE

Chris: I thought this was a bit dull. I can't imagine why anyone would want to play it unless they were heavily into *Star Trek*.

Richie: When we first reviewed it I played it about halfway through and got bored. Then I came back to it a couple of weeks ago and got about two thirds of the way through it and actually enjoyed it.

Steve: How do you know how far you are through it?

Richie: I'm just guessing from the amount of hours I've put into it. The story's quite good though, and walking around the ship is quite good fun. But most of the missions basically involve going to a ship, killing everything and coming back, then going off

somewhere else to do the same thing all over again.

Chris: I don't think the *Star Trek* theme is strong enough to carry it. It's basically an average game.

Richie: I think they put a lot more thought into the story than they put into the missions.

Chris: But the story isn't going to interest anyone if they're not into *Star Trek*.

Mark: There are two types of missions though. There are the

ones that are vaguely interesting where you're doing things you would expect, and then there are the ones where you're just dealing with hordes of aliens that are coming at you.

Steve: What are those Borg things that walk around? Are they just stupid, is that the idea?

Mark: Well that's how they are in the series, they just walk around.

Steve: Well what kind of enemy is that?

Chris: So you think they should have spent more time on the game rather than the license?

Steve: I don't know, I just don't understand why they're just walking around. You're walking around their ship with guns and

> **"I think they put a lot more thought into the story than they put into the missions"**
>
> RICHIE ON *ELITE FORCE*

they just stand there. Are they blind or something?

Mark: The idea is if they don't perceive you as a threat they don't do anything.

Steve: What? You're there with guns in their ship, how much more threatening can you be?

Mark: Well don't ask me, it's *Star Trek*.

Richie: A lot of it's a real cock-up. There's that one mission, the one where you go on to that ship and there's these flapping blue aliens and you kill about 500 of them

and get to the end of the mission to find they're not really dead.

Mark: I think for the most part they've done a good job with the story, introducing the *Elite Force* and things like that.

Chris: So who's the biggest Trekkie here?

Richie: Mark is I think.

Chris: What do you reckon Mark? Were they aiming the game solely at Trekkies? It certainly seems that way to me. There's nothing in it to interest people who play first-person shooters particularly. I won't be going back to it again.

Mark: Well, the only thing that would really appeal if you're a *Star Trek* fan is being in a Borg cube, or just the fact that you're walking around the ship. Apart from that it's not that big a deal for Trekkies.

Richie: The characters are really annoying too, you go up to use them and they say 'not now, I'm busy'.

Steve: Well exactly. How can they be busy? They're stranded in space on a big ship with nothing to do.

Martin: One good thing about it is that, apparently, there's a way of getting a lesbian act going in this game. If you play the female, and one of the female characters in the game comes up to you, they'll proposition or say they're interested in you because of some bug in the game.

Chris: Is this another one of those things that only ever happens to you and nobody else ever sees it?

Martin: Well, I don't know if it's true or not I just remember

reading about it somewhere.

Chris: So that's the best thing about the game for you then?

Martin: Yes, definitely.

Steve: I like the way you can choose the sex of your character.

Richie: Well, you can choose to play as a man or a woman, but they both have the same name.

Steve: That'll be why you see orders given by a woman and the crew says 'yes sir'.

Chris: I think this game is distinctly average and was over-rated when it came out. I'm not crazy about *Star Trek* but I kept an open mind when I played it and I didn't find anything in it that I hadn't seen before in lots of other first-person shooters. I suppose *Star Trek* fans will get something out of it, but I can't see anyone else getting into it.

Mark: I really enjoyed it, but I don't know if that's because I like *Star Trek*.

Richie: I really enjoyed it too, it's a good game.

Mark: The mission structure's quite good. The missions branch out sometimes and you can decide whether to do certain things or not or fail to do things and it affects how people react to you in the game.

Richie: But you don't really notice those things. There's so little interaction elsewhere that you don't really notice those dynamic bits. You can play the game once and think it's entirely linear, and unless you play it again knowing those dynamic bits are there you'll never notice them. But you're never going to play it twice anyway. It's not the kind of game you'll want to come back to.

Chris: No, let's face it, you're never going to play it twice.

➡

STAR TREK: ELITE FORCE

The *Star Trek* license was always going to give this game an edge, and to a large extent it has been well used in *Elite Force*. A strong story holds the game together, and fans will appreciate being able to explore a familiar ship and meet Borgs face to face in a game. As an FPS though, the *ZONE* team's opinion is divided.

ORIGINAL SCORE	84%
DEVELOPER	Raven
PUBLISHER	Activision
REVIEWED	PCZ #84

One of the best looking 3D engines in existence.

Seriously good fun in short bursts.

Lots of enemies, lots of colours, lots of everything really.

SERIOUS SAM

Martin: I love this game, but it's over too quickly. It's the one game where you can have shedloads of aliens coming at you and you get a real sense of excitement, especially when the buffalo hordes come charging at you and they butt you out of the way and throw you halfway across the level. It's brilliant, you can mow them down with mini-guns.

Steve: I actually reviewed *Serious Sam* for *PC Gear* magazine, and I think I'm the only person who didn't go nuts about it when it came out. I think

people just got really carried away. It's just an old-skool shooter, all you're doing is reversing and shooting stuff, it's very simplistic.

Chris: How is that any different to *Elite Force*? That is the same sort of thing, it is the same gameplay we've seen a million times. The pace is a bit faster in this I suppose.

Richie: It's different, it doesn't pay much attention to the story, it's just lots of enemies coming at you at once.

Steve: It's just too much, it's OK to start with but it just gets annoying after a while.

Mark: It's great fun to start with though.

Steve: It is. The first couple of hours are quite good but after that you simply get bored.

Martin: But that's exactly the point. It's the kind of game you're going to pick up and play for half an hour at a time. It's not the kind of game you're going to play for days on end.

Richie: Well, you play it until you finish it, which doesn't take that long.

Steve: I nearly finished it here in one session. I was about halfway through in two hours.

Chris: That's the problem with being able to save whenever you want. You complain

about not being able to save in *Project IGI* and then when you play a game that lets you save whenever you like you complain that it's over too quickly.

Richie: It was never meant to be a full game though. They designed the engine, and then they designed the game to be a demo for the engine and they must have thought it was quite good and released it as a game.

Mark: You have to give them their dues though, it's cheaper than all the other games here.

Chris: What's that got to do with anything? Either it's a good game or it's not. You don't give it brownie points just for being cheap. Anyway, when things are put out at a cheaper price there's usually a reason for it, if you know what I mean.

Martin: It's not that cheap anymore. When the review code went out the game got quite good scores, so they changed their minds and put it up ten quid.

Steve: That's despicable.

Chris: That's outrageous. It only received good scores because it was cheap, then they use the good scores to put the price up. I can't believe they did that.

Steve: It's a joke. All the reviewers just got far too excited when it came out. They went 'oh look it's from Croatia let's give it 90 per cent'.

Mark: I have to admit I found the first few hours quite entertaining. I actually laughed and screamed while I was playing it, but after that it gets really boring. You get to certain areas and it is just hundreds of enemies coming at

you really quickly. What you have to do is shoot a few, then quicksave, then shoot a few more and quicksave again.

Chris: Exactly. There's no skill in that. It's the most boring thing in the world, having to quicksave every couple of minutes while you mow down hundreds of enemies.

Mark: It becomes pretty boring after a while.

Chris: It was written as a technology demo so it was never going to be a great game anyway. They just wanted to show developers how many things they could fit on the screen at once without slowdown.

Richie: Well it's a good engine, but only an OK game. For £20 it would have been worth a look but for £30 they're taking the piss. I think it's still only $20 in the US.

Steve: US$20? That's only £15. I don't see why we have to pay more than them.

Chris: I wonder what kind of scores it got in the States. They score a lot higher than us anyway.

Richie: It received good scores over there too, but again that was only because it was cheap.

Steve: That's why you should never put the score up for

something just because it's cheap. You should just review it as it is. That's why I never even know the price, I just put a question mark at the end of the review and let someone fill it in. Whatever, it's still a boring game and nothing special. I won't be playing it again.

Chris: Me neither. I agree with Steve, everyone got carried away with the fun factor for the first hour or two and scored it highly because it was cheap.

Martin: One of our rivals (*coughs*) said something like if you only buy one game this year make it *Black & White*. If you only buy two make it *Black & White* and *Serious Sam*.

Chris: You're joking. I don't remember seeing that.

Martin: It's true.

> **"It's just too much, it's OK to start with, but it just gets annoying after a while"**
>
> **STEVE ON *SERIOUS SAM***

Steve: If anything *Serious Sam* is just a third-rate stopgap for *Duke Nukem Forever*. Even the character is just *Duke Nukem* with a different name.

Richie: I think *Duke Nukem Forever* will be amazing when it comes out.

Chris: So do I, but we're not talking about that, and I think we're all agreed *Serious Sam* is nothing special and at £30 it's a rip-off. Let's move on.

SERIOUS SAM

It started life as a technology demo, but Take 2 obviously decided it was too good to be wasted, so it was put out as a full product. Initially impressive and entertaining its origins as a showpiece for the engine becomes evident quite quickly, with repetitive gameplay creeping in after extended play.

ORIGINAL SCORE	81%
DEVELOPER	Coteam
PUBLISHER	Take 2
REVIEWED	PCZ #102

Even two years after its release *Half-Life*'s AI is still the best around.

There's an excellent selection of aliens on offer.

Half-Life's mods breathe new life into the gameplay.

HALF-LIFE GENERATIONS

Richie: Two years on *Half-Life* is still the best first-person shooter by quite a long way. And now you can buy it with the *Opposing Force* add on and *Counter-Strike* for the same price. I played it when it first came out and loved it, but I started playing it again recently just to see if it was still as good, and it is. It's like watching *Alien* again after six months, you know what's going to happen but it's still superb.
Mark: I wouldn't play *Opposing Forces* again, though. There's too much running around empty corridors.
Chris: But don't you think anyone

who was going to play *Half-Life* would have already played it by now?
Richie: So play it again. I'd rather play *Half-Life* again than any of the games here. But I reckon *Half-Life* will fall this year. This year it will get beaten, probably *by Duke Nukem Forever*, or *Wolfenstein*.
Mark: I don't think *Wolfenstein* will beat it. It looks brilliant, but I

don't think the gameplay will be as good as in *Half-Life*.
Richie: *Duke Nukem Forever* will probably be the one.
Steve: We've been saying that for three years. Is it ever going to come out? There will probably be a *Half-Life 2* before it comes out.
Richie: No there won't, they're doing another mission pack next. But it says a lot that *Half-Life* is still so good now. It's to PC games what *Star Wars* is to movies. It's huge.
Mark: Having played *Half-Life* already, it will be *Undying* I go back to now, even though *Half-Life* is a better game.

> ## "It's the only game where you can fight enemies and they'll regroup and hide and things like that"
> **MARK ON *HALF-LIFE: GENERATIONS***

Chris: I only played *Half-Life* once, and I'll still be going back to *Undying* after the Supertest. At least it's different to what we're used to. It doesn't quite have the atmosphere of *Half-Life* but it's a pretty close second. Having said that, if the only reason people buy *Generations* is to introduce themselves to *Counter-Strike*, then it can't be a bad thing.
Richie: Absolutely. *Half-Life* is still the best game here, and *Counter-*

Strike is one of those games you simply have to own.
Steve: I played *Half-Life* again and didn't think it was that good really. I saw stuff, shot stuff, the usual.
Chris: But aren't all first-person shooters suffering from that now? People have played so many of them you begin to wonder what's the point when you play so many that are the same.
Mark: For a two-year-old game it still manages to have the best enemy AI. It's still the only game where you can fight enemies and they'll regroup and hide and things like that. It doesn't happen in any other game.
Steve: Other games are quite stupid in comparison. Like a Klingon just standing saying 'hello, shoot me'. It just shows you what games have been doing since *Half-Life*, they've been going backwards.
Richie: It shows you how crap some developers are that they can't even beat a game that's been around for two years. Most games only stay on top for about three months, but still nothing can beat *Half-Life*.
Martin: It's a bizarre lack of imagination.
Richie: They're just getting a new engine and putting new colours in. That's all they're doing at the moment.
Mark: You can't base all that on *Half-Life* being old. Just because

some games are new, it doesn't necessarily mean they're better. Maybe the technology has just gone as far as it can at this point.
Chris: That doesn't make sense. They have better technology available to them now than Valve had with *Half-Life*, but rather than trying to come up with something interesting that we've never seen before, developers seem content to just take an engine, knock out a few maps, and give people new weapons to shoot things in the head with.
Steve: It's like films. You can't say one film's better than another because it has better special effects, it has to be good in itself. With games it's just down to the design, the engines are all pretty similar. Two years isn't such a long a time in the games industry for the engine to make a massive difference. So it's down to what they do with the engine once they've got it, not which one they use.
Mark: But

games don't use the same engine.
Steve: Well exactly. Look, you have lost the technology argument, you destroyed your own logic. Stop pushing on with it, you're not convincing anyone.
Chris: A good engine, does not a good game make. Or something like that.

➡

Half-Life: Generations

Half-Life still commands the respect of gamers worldwide. Notable for its immersive storyline and impressive enemy AI, Valve's masterpiece has swept aside all competition and become a truly influential title. The *Generations* pack includes the original game, the *Opposing Force* expansion and *Counter-Strike*.

ORIGINAL SCORE	95%
DEVELOPER	Valve
PUBLISHER	Vivendi
REVIEWED	PCZ #71

Put some clothes on Mr.

Undying is a truly scary game.

Evil creatures always come out at night.

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

Steve: *Realms Of The Haunting*...
Chris: That was a great game.
Steve: *Undying* is basically *Realms Of The Haunting* for the 21st century.
Richie: I thought this game was really scary.
Chris: What scared you Richie? Tell us all about it.
Richie: It obviously has the dark graphics and really creepy touches, like going into a room and seeing someone dead and seeing blood dripping from the ceiling and thinking 'what's going on here?' So

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

A great story from a great storyteller, and an intriguing game to boot. *Undying*'s use of atmosphere is what sets it apart. It uses fear as a tool to keep the player hooked, while time travel gives the game another dimension (literally). And excellent graphics combine to complete an intense, satisfying experience.

ORIGINAL SCORE	85%
DEVELOPER	EALA
PUBLISHER	EA
REVIEWED	PCZ #101

that's quite good. It all comes back to sound again. It's basically *Resident Evil* in first person. And it obviously has a good story, which helps. There was a little too much wandering around though, I think.
Steve: The voice acting was literally shocking.
Richie: True. At first I thought it was an American guy, then I thought, 'oh no, he's trying to be Irish'. The other annoying thing is you go everywhere and it keeps saying 'this door is locked' or 'it won't budge'. But apart from that it is great. The graphics are really nice, it looks a bit like *Alice*.
Mark: The problem with it looking so good, especially in the house, is it has to load up every single room. There's so much detail everywhere it just can't store everything in memory.
Richie: It's like when you open a door and you see all black you know it's going to load another part of the game. Again it's like *Resident Evil* when you go into a room and have to wait for it to load.
Chris: The load times didn't really bother me because it loads so quickly. But if you had to wait a minute before loading

every room then it would have been frustrating.
Mark: It gets better later on when you get much bigger areas and loading isn't so much of a problem. I like how the gameplay changes a lot. As soon as you leave the house and go into other areas, like when you go into the past you find better enemies to fight. They're really intelligent and have really good AI. And I like the monastery bit with the mad monks.
Richie: I quite like the spell thing in one hand and the weapon in the other. That's quite unusual.
Mark: The spell thing is good, but there's only two you really use, like the one you use when you hear a ghostly voice telling you to look around and you use the spell and see a bit of the past re-enacted in front of you. It's a bit like the apparitions in *System Shock 2*. Or you see a painting and use the spell and it changes what the painting looks like. It's really scary as well, very scary.
Martin: I was jumping at my own gunfire. It's the scariest game here without a shadow of a doubt, which is what makes it so exciting. The other games rely either on stealth or enemies charging towards you. This one relies on lighting and sound.
Chris: It's definitely the most atmospheric game here. None of the other games on test make you think twice about entering the next room or area.
Mark: There aren't enough puzzles in it. They could have done more with how you interact

with the environment. Everything just happens automatically.
Richie: There are certain things about it that are really cool, though. Usually in a game like this you go into a house and you kill all the bad guys or whatever and you go to the next level and you're in another world or realm. What *Undying* does that's quite clever is you see something glowing at a door and you think there must be something nasty in there but

> **❝I was jumping at my own gunfire. It's the scariest game here without a doubt❞**
>
> MARTIN ON *CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING*

when you go over to it, it takes you to another dimension.
Martin: You would think by now though you'd have first-person shooters that branch out in different directions. With this one you go down the same path every time. Why do these games have to be so linear?
Steve: You're obviously going to be pushed in a certain direction all the time.
Chris: It's true. If you had a totally non-linear first-person game with huge levels that branched off somewhere different every time people would complain that they were always getting lost. That's the trouble with these open-ended games, they feel a bit aimless.

Mark: *Deus Ex* is the only game that came close to getting it right.
Steve: Most games just give you bloody great levers to pull. They can't keep doing that.
Chris: No, levers are crap, but even if you give players the opportunity to choose where to go in the game and when, they're still fighting the same things and have the same gameplay when they get there, in addition to getting lost on the

way. What's the point in that?
Martin: Well, it would be better than all these linear shoot 'em ups.
Richie: It depends on the game. If it has a good story that drives it along like *Half-Life* it doesn't matter if the gameplay is a bit linear.
Steve: *Undying* has a good story but it's basically a horror film. It's a horror film and a sci-fi film. It's basically like being in a film.
Chris: What's wrong with that? It's a good film, if you want to put it like that.
Mark: It's a great game. I played it for about a week and I think I've nearly finished it. I'm definitely going back to it when the Supertest is over.

Nice birdy.

Cool, but not as good as *Half-Life*.

GUNMAN CHRONICLES

Steve: *Gunman Chronicles* is OK because you get to shoot dinosaurs.
Martin: It's one of the best *Half-Life* add ons, but it's far too linear. You're always rushed to the next bit.
Richie: I thought it was a bit short.
Chris: I thought it was too.
Mark: I really enjoyed it while I was playing it but I wouldn't go back to it.

Chris: What did you like about it?
Mark: I just enjoyed it.
Chris: Oh.
Mark: It's a dumb shoot 'em up, but sometimes that's all you want.
Richie: It's just an inferior verion of *Half-Life*.
Mark: It was originally intended as a MOD.
Chris: It was a MOD originally, then they realised they could

probably make money out of it so they made a new episode of it and stuck it in a box.
Mark: It's all very comic-book stupid, nobody's going to take it seriously.
Richie: It doesn't use the AI of *Half-Life* in any way, so what's the point in making it in the first place?
Martin: I think it's good.
Steve: It's OK for the first few hours, but I'm bored of it now.

> ## "There's nothing about it that feels different in any way, except for maybe the dinosaurs"
>
> **CHRIS ON *GUNMAN CHRONICLES***

Richie: I completed it in a day, you start off on a train going to work. Yeah, where have we heard that before? Then things go wrong.
Mark: Well it was meant to be a MOD. It's meant to *be Half-Life* in space.
Richie: Well, it's not *Half-Life* in space.
Martin: If it hadn't been so linear it would have been incredible. It all felt a bit rushed, but it was still brilliant while it lasted. They probably shouldn't have given it

a full price release. It's not really long enough to warrant spending a lot of money on. But it's still excellent fun.
Mark: I loved it while it lasted.
Chris: You were just saying you like a dumb shoot 'em up sometimes. Fine, but why pick this one? There are much better ones around than this.
Mark: Like what?
Chris: *Half-Life* for a start.
Mark: *Half-Life*'s an intelligent shoot 'em up.
Chris: *Serious Sam* then, which is a bit crap but it's still better than this. Or if you really want a dumb first-person shooter that badly go and play single-player *Quake*. I can't think of any reason why people would want to pay to play *Gunman Chronicles*.
Richie: I'd rather play *Serious Sam* than this. I mean, the dinosaurs look really good, I didn't know the *Half-Life* engine could do that kind of thing, and the helicopter guys you get later in the game look good too, but the rest of it isn't that great.
Mark: Yes it is.
Chris: It just feels like there's something missing from it. It's like someone just got a really obvious idea for a *Half-Life* mission pack and just sort of threw it together. There's nothing

about it that feels different in any way, except for maybe the dinosaurs.
Richie: Well it was done by a MOD team, and if they released this version of it as a MOD we'd probably say it's amazing.
Martin: It is amazing, it's just a bit short.
Mark: Exactly.
Chris: It would have been good if you got it free. But pay good money for it and you're bound to be disappointed.
Steve: What if youre rich? You probably wouldn't care then.
Richie: It's sold on the basis that it's somehow related to *Half-Life*, but it isn't really. It's just a cash in.
Martin: I really enjoyed it, I just wanted to see what was going to happen next.
Chris: Did you think the story was that good then?
Steve: It wasn't particularly good, it

was just interesting to see where you were going to go next and maybe shoot some spiders and leave your brain at the door. Who wants to think anyway?

GUNMAN CHRONICLES

It started life as a MOD, and as a MOD it was impressive. It made no pretentions to being anything other than a mindless shoot 'em up, powered by *the Half-Life* engine. In this incarnation, it's gone up in the world a bit, and is now a full price release. As such, it pits itself against the first-person shooter heavyweights.

ORIGINAL SCORE	87%
DEVELOPER	Gear Box
PUBLISHER	Vivendi
REVIEWED	PCZ #97

SUPERTEST WINNER

OVERALL WINNER

Blasting off in the right direction

If you've read this Supertest up to this point you probably don't need to be told the winner. Yes, it's *Half-Life*. Its masterful storytelling and superior AI are yet to be beaten since its release two years ago, which doesn't bode very well for this genre. It's hard to believe there are no developers capable of delivering a game experience as innovative and richly rewarding as *Half-Life*, and in truth, although there are some excellent games here (most notably *Undying* and *Project IGI*) there was never any doubt from the start as to which game was

going to win. If you've played *Half-Life* and don't want to go back to it again, and you're looking for something new and challenging, there isn't a lot to choose from in this genre, but if you're looking for something that requires a little thought to accompany the mindless blasting, you could do worse than *Project IGI*. It's not the best shooter in the world, but it offers a new slant on this genre with the introduction of stealth and open environments. If you're after a good story and a believable atmosphere, look no further than *Clive Barker's Undying*.

Half-Life: still the king of the first-person shooters.

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Finally, *Tim Ponting* gets his hands on the card he's been drooling over for the past few months

Ever since GeForce3 just missed *ZONE*'s extensive comparative review of graphics cards in issue 102, we've been itching to get our hands on one – and with drivers in a state approved for review by NVIDIA – which has taken quite some time. But it's here in all its glory now, courtesy of Elsa in the form of the Gladiac 920.

Doing justice to GeForce3 technology in a one-page review is impossible, so if you want more details, head to www.nvidia.com/products/geforce3.nsf for further info. But in brief, there are three main improvements that GF3 brings to the party. The first is an improved memory system, known as Lightspeed Memory Architecture. This uses several techniques to reduce the amount of data being transferred to and from the memory on the graphics card. GF3 uses a smart memory controller that can read information in and out of the frame buffer in variable-sized chunks, depending on how many pixels each element of the image occupies. In other words, it doesn't waste time using an articulated lorry to carry data that would fit in a Transit van. It compresses this information as well, using a 'lossless' compression system that ensures that what goes in comes out exactly the same at the other end. Finally, NVIDIA has developed a

resolutions and colour depths, GF3 overtakes in higher res and higher colour, due to its improved memory management.

The second radical element of GeForce3 is its new engine: nfiniteFX. This has both vertex and pixel shader functionality. In plain English, vertex shaders offer programmers the ability to use special instructions on the graphics processor itself to change the behaviour of vertices (the corners of triangles that make up all the shapes in a 3D scene). In this way, you can 'morph' the object in real time without having to use the CPU of the computer – perfect for animating faces, cloth, water, breathing and so on. The Pixel Shader operates in much the same way, allowing real-time manipulation of pixels to give more powerful lighting and texturing functions.

If there's a downside to nfiniteFX, it's that you'll have to wait for games that make the most of its features. Fortunately, it's all accessible via DirectX 8.0, so although these features are new, they're at least accessible through a third-party (Microsoft) API, albeit one NVIDIA had rather a large hand in.

One major improvement that certainly doesn't require new games to reveal its benefit is a new FSAA technology ('full-scene anti-aliasing', reducing jaggies along the edges of objects).

⊙ The best graphics card in the world? Yes, but at a price.

of FSAA, it's a revelation – 68 frames-per-second in 32-bit colour at 1024x768 on our testbed Athlon, compared with just 30 FPS for GeForce2 Ultra. Or if you like running games at 1280x1024 in

32-bit colour, then it'll be pretty solid under OpenGL or Direct3D – and in games

BEST BUY

with software T&L as well as hardware T&L. Frankly, at the top end, nothing else comes close. Factor in the next-generation features, and NVIDIA has its first across the board winner for quite a while. GeForce2 Ultra was an expensive sledgehammer; GeForce3 has a bigger brain to go with that sledgehammer. It may be expensive, but you pay for what no one else can give you… at least, not yet… **PCZ**

PCZVERDICT 93%

> ❝It may be expensive, but you pay for what no one else can give you❞

method of reducing overdraw (see the Hercules Prophet 4500 for more on that term) called 'Z-Occlusion Culling'. This reduces the number of pixels that are rendered and textured despite the fact they are never visible on screen. It's not as clever as tile-based rendering but a step in the right direction.

As a result of this memory jiggling, GeForce3 is much better than GeForce2 at rendering complex scenes in high colour, as the benchmarks show. While GeForce2 Ultra can compete on brute force terms at lower

Because the graphics processor can internally handle more data relating to adjacent pixel shades than before with no performance hit, and also has access to a new super-clever sampling technique known as 'Quincunx' (after the five pattern on a die), GeForce3 is the first card that really – and I mean really – offers proper FSAA.

As a result of the memory management improvements and anti-aliasing, GeForce3 can actually be recommended for its current performance, provided you're serious about the money you spend on gaming. For fans

THE BENCHMARKS

Do you remember our 3D card round-up in issue 102? Here's how the two new cards stack up against the competition. Both cards are marked in different colours and you can see that the Elsa Gladiac is the new daddy, although the budget Hercules does more than enough for its price

32-bit Direct3D Performance
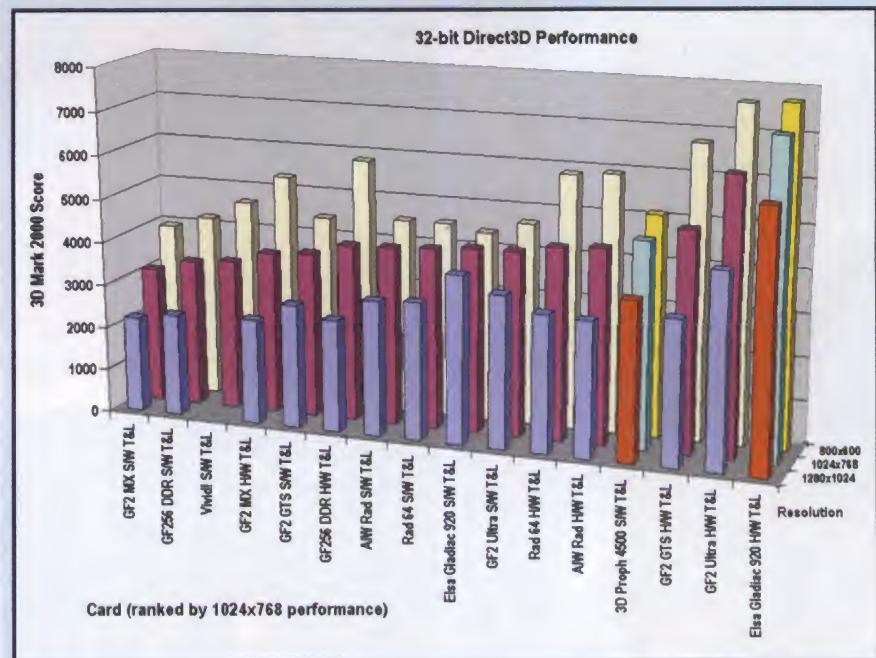
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Can't afford a GeForce3? According to *Tim Ponting* things aren't quite as bad as they seem

A behemoth of a card at the asking price, and more than a challenge for other high-end offerings.

BEST BUDGET

We've championed the Kyro chipset for a while, when many others have damned it with the faint praise "it's cheap". In our comprehensive group test of video cards in issue 102, Kyro (in the form of VideoLogic's 32Mb Vivid!) performed well, given its price-performance ratio. In games that support hardware Transform and Lighting (T&L), GeForce2 MX cards clearly outperform and out-value it – but for the rest, such as *Half-Life*, it's neck-and-neck on performance and costs less. And with increasing scene complexity, Kyro

its drivers are not as free of visual glitches as NVIDIA's. However, we still think the technology has both huge potential and current validity, doubly so now Kyro II has arrived on the scene.

The first company to market with boards is Hercules, long-time NVIDIA partners. For them, there's been some major neck-sticking-out to bring the 3D Prophet 4500 to market – and with good reason.

Kyro II is basically the same as Kyro, but with faster core and memory speed – 175MHz as opposed to 115MHz in both cases, utilising just SDR (Single Data Rate) RAM. Its performance, however, elevates it massively, as

"With increasing scene complexity, the Kyro chipset will perform just as well when GeForce2 MX cards start to falter"

will perform just as well when GeForce2 MX cards start to falter.

There's been considerable online debate about Kyro for some time – there's no doubt that

the benchmarks reveal. While it may be NVIDIA that is smarting that its 'lower end' MX chipset is under attack, it's really ATI with the Radeon chipset that should,

and will, suffer. In resolutions above 800x600, Kyro II blows it away, even without the benefit of T&L support. Our benchmark reveals that Kyro II's software T&L gives better results than Radeon hardware T&L in 32-bit colour at sensible resolutions.

The technology behind Kyro II dates back to 1997, something NVIDIA seems to consider a drawback. Why? Everyone concurs that the main problem when running 3D games on fast machines is down to memory bandwidth limitations. Kyro uses tile-based rendering to reduce the relevance of memory bandwidth. To reiterate its benefits as I wrote in an earlier article in *PC ZONE*: 'Most 3D accelerators, including NVIDIA's GeForce2, employ so-called "immediate rendering":

every polygon within a scene is rendered, whether it's obscured by another polygon in front of it or not. In other words, every single pixel is textured and shaded, then the Z-Buffer is consulted to see whether it's "in front" and needs to be drawn. This is a simple, effective, but hugely wasteful way of rendering a scene as it sucks up video memory bandwidth like a hoover on steroids.'

Rendering unseen polygons is known as 'overdraw', and is the bane of GeForce2. GeForce3, and ATI's Radeon chipset, use various techniques to reduce overdraw, but none as elegant and efficient as 'tile-based' rendering as used by Kyro. This first sub-divides the screen into tiles. Before anything else happens, surfaces that aren't visible within the tile are removed; only then are the individual pixels textured, shaded and drawn on screen. Kyro just doesn't care how 'deep' a scene is or what order the polygons are calculated – it performs the calculation as to
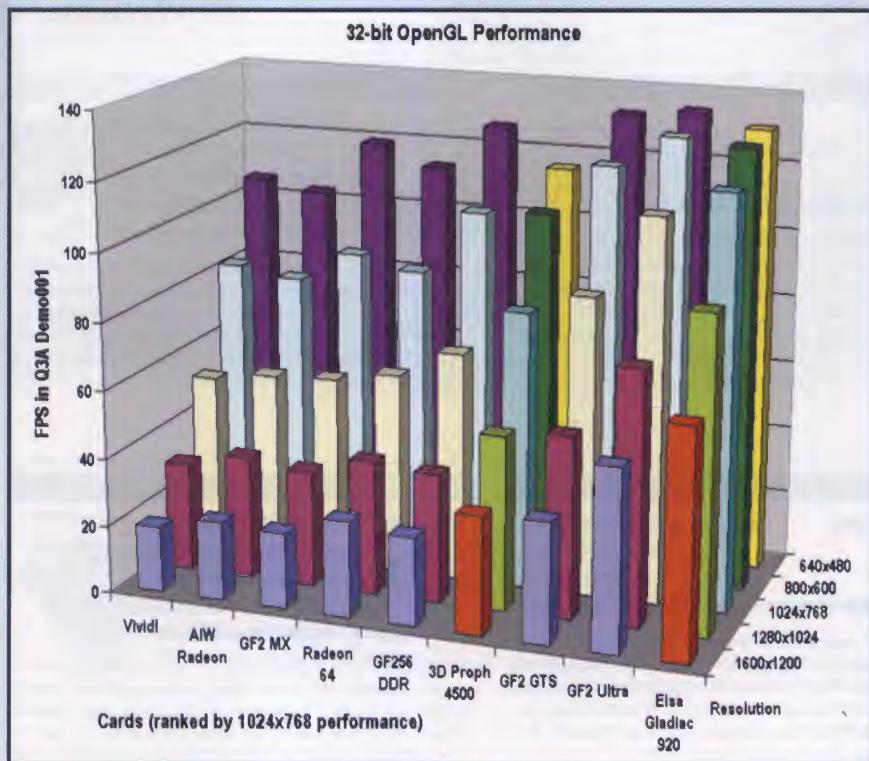
what's visible on screen and draws the minimum.

At an RRP of £130 for the Hercules 3D Prophet 4500 and with street prices likely to be lower, nothing else comes near in terms of bang for your buck. In 32-bit colour, the effect of the lack of a hardware T&L engine is reduced massively. At 1024x768, there is no card faster when you're playing *Counter-Strike*, including GeForce3. All that is needed is a little more work on the drivers – and now both Hercules and VideoLogic are working on this – and the market boils down to two choices: Kyro II at the low end and GeForce3 at the top. The gauntlet is now clearly at ATI's feet – Radeon offers nothing in the middle that counters either GeForce3 or Kyro II. PowerVR technology has returned with a vengeance. ▣

PCZVERDICT 90%

32-bit OpenGL Performance

FPS in Q3A Demo001

Cards: Vivid!, AIW Radeon, GF2 MX, Radeon 64, GF256 DDR, 3D Proph 4500, GF2 GTS, GF2 Ultra, Elsa Gladiac 920

Resolution: 640x480, 800x600, 1024x768, 1280x1024, 1600x1200

Cards (ranked by 1024x768 performance)

BUYER'S GUIDE

Buy memory! Now! www.crucial.com has the best site around, says Tim Ponting. Just select your motherboard and it will tell you what you need. You might also want to check out these gobsmacking Athlon price drops, pick a new CD-RW drive and take a peek at these video cards. You've never had it so good

MOTHERBOARD

BEST BUY
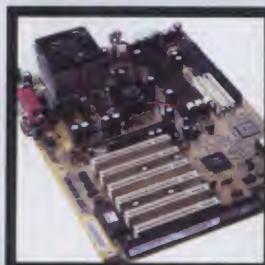
ABIT KT-7A RAID
STREET PRICE £141, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Abit
TELEPHONE 01438 741999   **WEBSITE** www.abit.nl/english

~~£150~~
£141

Back in our Christmas Upgrade feature, we recommended the KT-7 RAID from Abit. Since then, there's been an upgrade to the KT-7A RAID. This adds support for 266MHz Front Side Bus (FSB) 'C'-type Athlons. Why are we not recommending next-gen AMD or Intel-based systems with DDR/RAMBUS memory? Because currently, the speed benefits are tiny compared with the extra cost. We like the Abit motherboard for its ATA-100 support (faster hard drive performance) and over-clocking potential. The chipset also has its own fan.

BEST BUDGET

GIGABYTE GA-7ZM
STREET PRICE £87, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Gigabyte
TELEPHONE 01908 362700
WEBSITE www.gbt-tech.co.uk

~~£87~~
£84

This is basically a sawn-off equivalent of our preferred motherboard, utilising the older chipset version (VIA KT133) and in Micro-ATX format – one AGP and three PCI slots. It'll take both Athlon and Duron Socket A processors of varying speeds, so has upgrade potential. I've used GB motherboards for years and found them the best of the cheaper brands.

PROCESSOR

BEST BUY   **NEW ENTRY**

AMD 1.33GHZ ATHLON
STREET PRICE £168
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE 01276 803 100   **WEBSITE** www.amd.com

Just when you thought it was safe to buy a processor, AMD and the vendors selling its chips go totally bananas. You can now buy a 1.33GHz Socket A Athlon for the miserly sum of £168 from Dabs.com. Athlon is still clearly the processor of choice for the gamer, unless you're into spending a fortune on the latest Intel P4/expensive memory. As Athlons over 1GHz are only available only In Socket A configuration, make sure you've got the right motherboard. Bear in mind as well that you'll need to fit a hefty fan to keep the beast cool, and this may not fit too well in your case if the power supply sits over the processor. Why bother to over-clock?

BEST BUDGET

AMD 800MHZ DURON
STREET PRICE £63, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER AMD
TELEPHONE 01276 803100
WEBSITE www.amd.com

~~£63~~
£53

Durons are basically Athlons with smaller Level 2 (L2) processor caches. This reduces overall performance somewhat, but still compares favourably with Intel's ageing Celeron chip cache structure. Besides, Duron still has the blistering Floating Point Unit (FPU) mathematical calculation speed, making it the processor of choice for gamers.

HARD DRIVE

BEST BUY

IBM DESKSTAR 75GXP 30Gb
STREET PRICE £115, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER IBM
TELEPHONE 0800 169 1458   **WEBSITE** www.storage.ibm.com

~~£120~~
£115

I find it hard to believe that you can buy a 30Gb ATA-100 hard drive for less than £120 – particularly one as excellent as IBM's Deskstar 75GXP. Mine sits in the heart of a hard disk recording system for music, which needs fantastic performance and unquestionable reliability, both of which it delivers. It has a rotational speed of 7,200 RPM (faster than some but slower than others – a good compromise between price and performance) and an average seek time of less than 8.5ms. If 30Gb ain't big enough for you, the range extends to a whopping 75Gb, though you'll need around £310 to buy such a beast.

BEST BUDGET

SEAGATE U SERIES 5 20Gb
STREET PRICE £73, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Seagate
TELEPHONE 01628 890366
WEBSITE www.seagate.com

~~£73~~
£70

It's tough these days finding a drive that doesn't offer an ATA-100 interface – in fact, all the decent ATA-66 drives cost more than their ATA-100 equivalents! Seagate's fabulous ATA-100 U Series 5 drives redefine budget performance, featuring 5,400 RPM platters with a sub-9ms seek time. The 20Gb drive is a good compromise between price and capacity.

MONITOR

BEST BUY

IIYAMA VISION MASTER PRO 510 22in
STREET PRICE £720
MANUFACTURER iiyama
TELEPHONE 01438 745482   **WEBSITE** www.iiyama.co.uk

I've been a devotee of iiyama products for years – both my monitors at home are iiyamas, both are comparatively old, yet as good as new. The Vision Master Pro 510 has a stunning 22in screen (albeit with only around 20in of it visible). The tube is a Mitsubishi Diamondtron NF (Natural Flat), arguably the best-performing flat-screen CRT for the money currently available. Of all the large-screen monitors we've come across recently, it's the best all-rounder, with a tight focus right to the screen corners and fabulous colour purity. It also features iiyama's own Anti-Glare coating, and a maximum resolution of 2048x1536.

BEST BUDGET

HANSOL 710P 17in
STREET PRICE £160, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hansol
TELEPHONE 01252 360400
WEBSITE www.hansol-uk.com

For the budget-conscious gamer in need of a monitor, Hansol is a company well worth a look. There is nothing naff at all about the 710P – yet it still has a fabulously low price for the specification. It will handle 1024x768 with a vertical refresh rate of 85Hz, and 1600x1200 at a creditable 75Hz. For the money there's not a lot that'll touch this.

GRAPHICS CARD

BEST BUY　　　　　　　**NEW ENTRY**

HERCULES 3D PROPHET 64MB
STREET PRICE £130, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Hercules
TELEPHONE 020 8686 5600　**WEBSITE**
www.hercules-uk.com

The new Kyro II chipset (see p110) blows away its slower Kyro brethren at 175MHz clock speed as opposed to 115MHz. The 4500 is the first card to market featuring the chip, though VideoLogic is close behind with an even cheaper 32Mb version. If you play *Counter-Strike* at 1024x768 in 32-bit colour, this is faster than a GeForce3... at less than half the price...

BEST BUY

ELSA GLADIAC 920
STREET PRICE £350, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Elsa
TELEPHONE (0800) 056 3445　　**WEBSITE** www.elsa.de/international/uk/index.htm

At last this card that's been Best Buy for the last three months is now available to buy. We've finally, finally, reviewed it (p110) and with the new NVIDIA drivers, it kicks ass. The 32-bit colour performance is cool, the FSAA (full scene anti-aliasing) is blinding, and it's got all the nifty DX8 features you could want. We love it, and its price has dropped a full 50 nicker from the proposed price. It's the first card to support the sexier features of DirectX 8.0. Elsa's Gladiac features an S-Video socket for output to TV – a hell of a lot more useful than you'd think and comes with a full, specially enhanced version of *Giants: Citizen Kabuto*.

SOUND CARD

BEST BUDGET

SOUNDBLASTER PCI512
STREET PRICE £45, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Creative Labs
TELEPHONE 01189 344322
WEBSITE www.soundblaster.com

As Creative's SoundBlaster Live! reaches the end of its shelf life, the company has released a cut-down version featuring the same chipset – the SoundBlaster PCI512. Providing all the bells and whistles required by gamers, this cheaper card represents superb value for money while still supporting DirectSound 3D acceleration and Environmental Audio (EAX).

BEST BUY

VIDEOLOGIC SONICFURY
STREET PRICE £60-75, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE 01923 277488　　**WEBSITE** www.videologic.com

VideoLogic's SonicFury was the first sound card to utilise the super-efficient Crystal CS4630 chipset, and is still the best value for money. What's so special about it? The chipset, known as SoundFusion, is a multi-purpose Digital Signal Processor (DSP) that can be reprogrammed in software depending on the function it's being used to accelerate. As a result, it can give hardware support for up to 96 streams of DirectSound 3D audio, more than enough for today's crop of games. If you hunt around, you can also find an OEM version of the card on sale with no software bundle – a bargain at under £60.

SPEAKERS

BEST BUDGET

ALTEC LANSING ATP3
STREET PRICE £75
MANUFACTURER Altec Lansing
TELEPHONE N/A
WEBSITE www.alteclansing.com

The only other multimedia speaker company we've ever had time for is Altec Lansing, whose decently priced products never fail to impress, even if they lack the hi-fi credentials of VideoLogic products. The ATP3 is a sub and two sat combination that delivers a typically meaty, crisp Altec sound. If your budget stretches, you can try the ATP5 for 4.1 gaming.

BEST BUY

VIDEOLOGIC SIROCCO CROSSFIRE
STREET PRICE £210, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER VideoLogic
TELEPHONE 01923 277488　　**WEBSITE** www.videologic.com

Quite how many times this speaker set is going to appear in the *ZONE* halls of fame I'm not sure, but it shows no sign of being eclipsed in terms of quality for 4.1 gaming. By 4.1 we mean, front left and right and rear left and right satellite speakers, coupled with a big meaty subwoofer. The fact that this speaker set is rated at 100W RMS doesn't sound that impressive – but when you consider that you can crank the dial around 80 per cent of the way before they start to distort, you'll understand our fondness for these. And with 1000W Peak Mean Power Output on tap, the loud bits are, um, really flipping loud.

CDRW DRIVES

BEST BUDGET

TEAC CDW58EK 8X8X32
STREET PRICE £89, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Teac
TELEPHONE 01923 225 235　**WEBSITE**
www.teac.co.uk

I've just had to buy a load of CD/RW drives and these Teac drives were dead cheap, easy to install and have worked without hitch. Bearing in mind my first CD-RW drive cost me well over £250 and was flaky and slow, these babies are a good deal. Make sure you shop around and you're laughing all the way to dubiously legal compilations...

BEST BUY

PLEXTOR 16/10/40A
STREET PRICE £170 inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Plextor
TELEPHONE +32 2 725 5522　　**WEBSITE** www.plextor.com

Another one of those hardware recommendations based on experience. We've been running Plextor CDs, DVDs and CD-Rs for years in our machines, both at home and at work, and they're a) bulletproof and b) fast as anything you'll get within a few quid of the asking price. This is a brand new drive that is dead fast, offers Sanyo Burnproof technology and is competitively priced alongside some good contenders from Yamaha and Mirai. It comes with WinOnCD (nowhere near as good as Nero but proven) and offers CD-R, CD-RW and fast CD-Read performance. I'd upgrade, but my ancient SCSI 6x Plextor CD-R still cuts the mustard – three years on...

MOUSE

BEST BUDGET

MICROSOFT USB INTELLIMOUSE
STREET PRICE £15, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Microsoft
TELEPHONE 0870 601 0100
WEBSITE www. microsoft.com/products/
hardware/mouse/intellimouse.htm

The basic USB Intellimouse is one of the finest control devices ever produced – accurate, comfortable to use and, above all, cheap. In fact, all the fancy mice Microsoft has produced since then are deeply inferior for gaming in our opinion, mainly due to shape and button positioning.

BEST BUY

RAZER BOOMSLANG 2000
STREET PRICE £70, inc VAT
MANUFACTURER Labtec
TELEPHONE 01256 386000　　**WEBSITE** www.razerzone.com, www.labtec.com

These fabulous über-mice have been the instrument of death for the *Quake* elite for a couple of years now. During this time, the only way you could get your hands on one was to import it from the US and pay a premium, as you couldn't actually buy them in this country. But now all this has changed, thanks to Labtec picking up the hardware. OK, so it is rather expensive and it also takes quite a bit of getting used to, but if you're looking for a real lift to your gaming, then the Razer Boomslang 2000 is the only way to go.
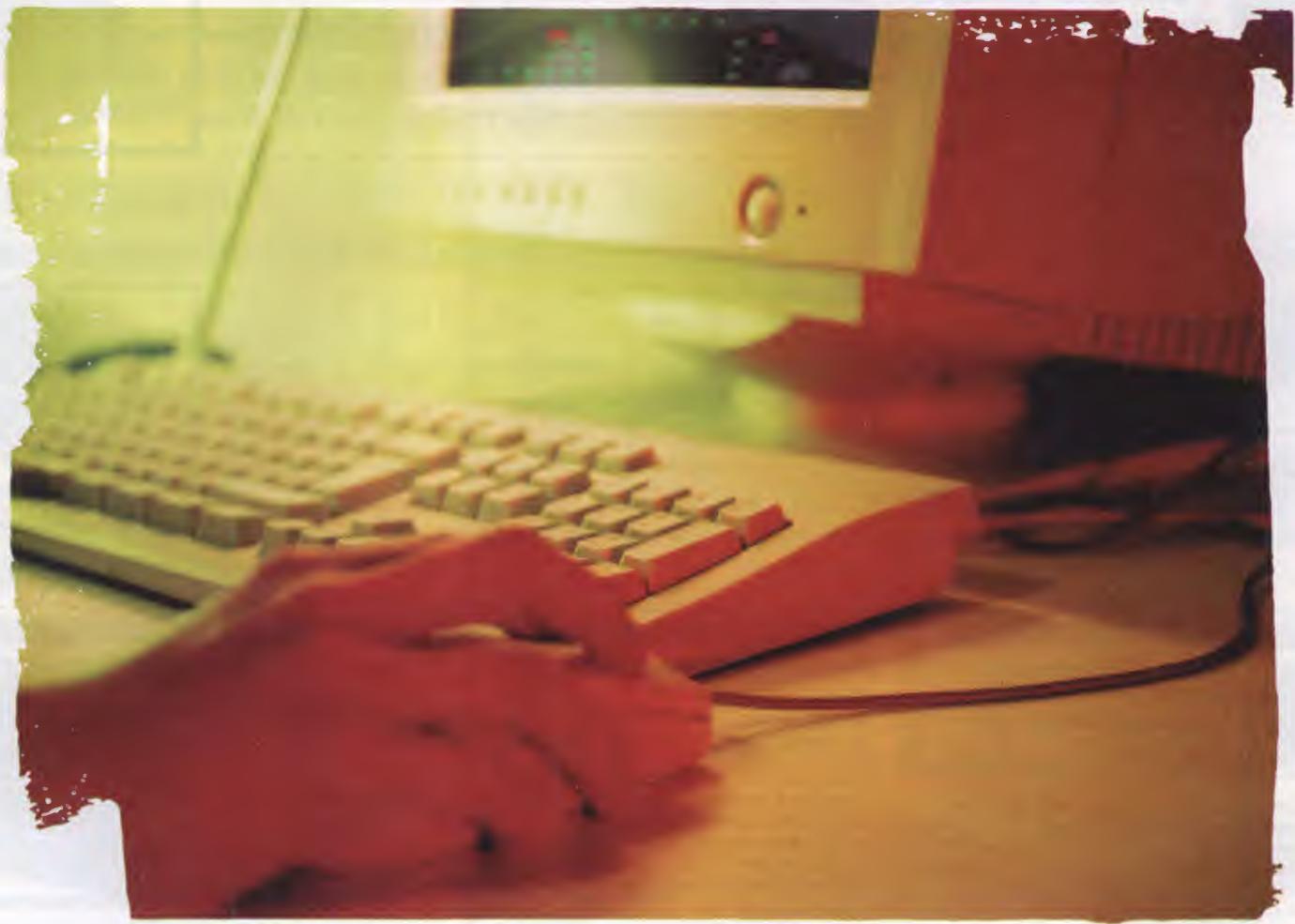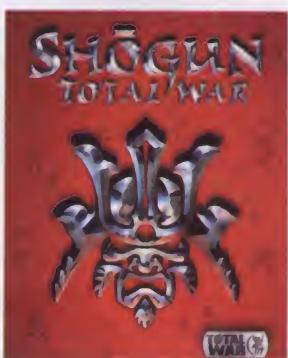
TRIGGER HAPPY PC

2 GAMES FOR £15
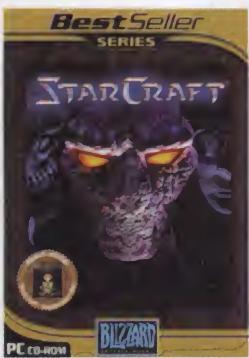
STARCRAFT & BROODWARS

PHARAOH

HOMEWORLD

DIABLO

LOADS MORE TITLES
AVAILABLE IN STORE

WHATEVER TURNS YOU ON *Virgin* megastores

FACE/OFF
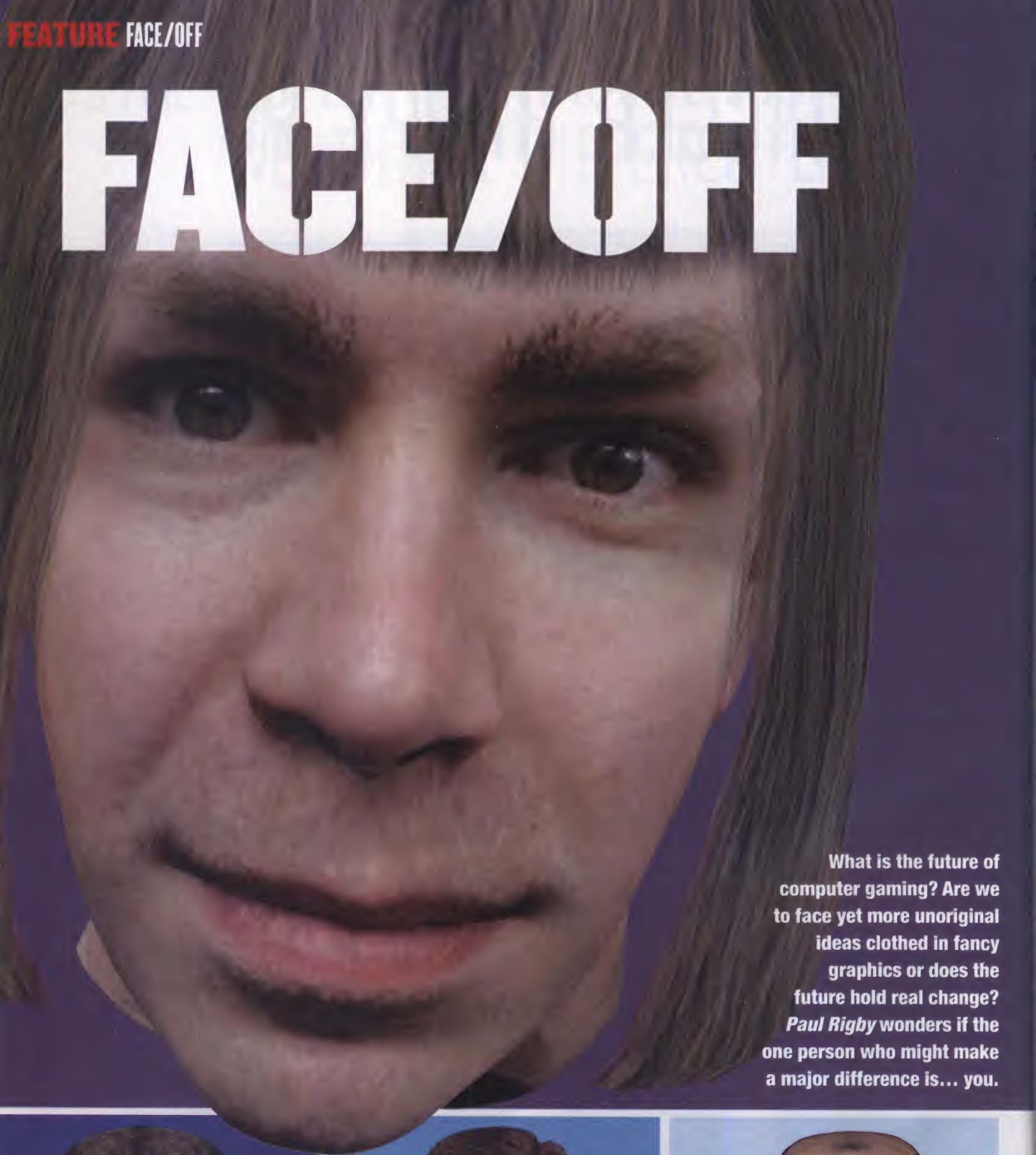
What is the future of computer gaming? Are we to face yet more unoriginal ideas clothed in fancy graphics or does the future hold real change? *Paul Rigby* wonders if the one person who might make a major difference is... you.

E very few years a new generation of PCs hit the market, alongside the usual influx of Japanese-sourced consoles. When this occurs gamers expect rapidly changing games and genres. But listen, we've seen it before and it just ain't so. Up until today it's never really happened, has it? What you are given is better looking and sounding driving games, action games (the same ones) with more bells and whistles, smoother and more colourfully realistic animation in your RPGs, and so on. Originality tends to lie at the feet of publishers' accountants, under which it tends to remain statically pinned by conservative heels.

Of course, if the creative players in the gaming industry can't move things onwards through traditional routes, they'll find other ways. If you want to find out what will happen in the gaming future then it's best to look closer to home. Imagine a reality where games get up close and *really* personal. Where photo-realistic images of you, your friends and relations appear in your favourite boxed gaming title or online game. Where, in a rally game, you can see and hear your brother in the other car as you scream, bumper-to-bumper, playing chicken to the next corner. Real-time, person-to-person gaming would mean that, finally, we won't have to worry about crap AI. Because you'll be able to see and, with the benefit of real-time voice communication, hear your friend trying to blow you away with a pump-action shotgun from behind that hill and shouting foul and rather personal abusive language as he sees the answering grenade arcing in his direction. All of these features have been promised for some time but, in the past, we all suffered from slow PCs, slow Internet connections, clunky software and hardware, so most people were put off. Now things are changing – fast. Wide-bandwidth Internet connections are almost here, PCs are screaming with GHz of speed and developers are wising up to the possibilities.

THE CONTENDERS

One of the major players pushing for change is the UK-based Digimask. Digimask has developed 'Avatar' creation software, which will allow you to put your head in a compatible game by submitting front-on and profile shots of your face. But that's not the full story. A Digimask is a unique, full 3D model of your head (ie an avatar) that can be fully animated by the game you are playing. Hence, if the game allows it, having your own Digimask means you will be able to load a 3D image of yourself into a game.

Games that will use Digimask technology, in development now include *World Rally Championship 2001* – a new title from Evolution. Martin Kenwright, managing director of Evolution Studios says: "All the drivers and co-drivers from the real-world rally championship have been modelled, in a full 3D virtual cockpit within the game. In future versions of the game the player will be able to import his own 3D head." Kenwright believes this form of technology holds real promise: "Using the heads of real drivers as well as the real cars and locations provides an extra level of immersion for the player. As more realistic visuals arrive with new technology, it seems like logical step to have your image within a 3D environment." After all, he says: "It is all about being there."

World Rally Championship 2001 will also allow you to look across in a first-person view or use external replay-style cameras, as well as see a realistic co-driver speak their course notes as they are thrown around inside the cockpit.

Evolution's *World Rally Championship 2001* will allow you to drive as you, in appearance as well as name thanks to Digimask.

Gary Bracey, head of Digimask.

It may soon be time to reveal yourselves.

Ron Harris, director of On-Line Sports, agrees heartily. Its new title, *Sky Sports Football Manager*, is, oddly enough, based around football management. "The player," explains Harris, "takes the role of managing one of the 114 teams in the English leagues (including the Conference),

> **❝As more realistic visuals arrive with new technology, it seems like a logical step to have your image within a 3D environment, After all, it's about being there❞**
>
> MARTIN KENWRIGHT, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF EVOLUTION STUDIOS

competing head-to-head with the other 'managers' in his league. We have yet to finalise our usage of Digimask but, at this point, it is intended that it will be used to represent players in team-oriented chatrooms and to portray commentators in-game."

As Digimask boss Gary Bracey reveals, there are other developers who are waking up to the potential of this new technology: "It is intended that THQ will use Digimask in the forthcoming World Wrestling Federation games for PC, as well as using Digimask to accurately capture the real WWF stars. Players will also be able to use their Digimasks to

put themselves in the ring, so the effect will be totally convincing."

MORE LIP

Digimask's technology push hasn't stopped there, though. Recently it signed a deal with a US-based company called LIPSinc whose proprietary technology takes a person's voice and automatically generates animation for a talking character with precise lip-synching and facial movements – in real time. Bracey says: "Together Digimask and LIPSinc's technologies enable the first automated solutions for the creation of talking characters that are accurate representations of real people."

American-based, CyberExtruder's web-based Avatar creation product is even easier to use when generating a final player image. You just submit a single digitised facial image of any size to it website (**www.cyberextruder.com**) and it does the rest. Larry Gardner, CEO of CyberExtruder explains: "That image is automatically analysed and the face is mapped and a highly accurate 3D model is created in seconds. This 3D model can then be inserted into computer games to be the face of the

Unfortunately, BT's virtual chatrooms don't serve drinks.

Nick and Gordon, from BTopenworld.
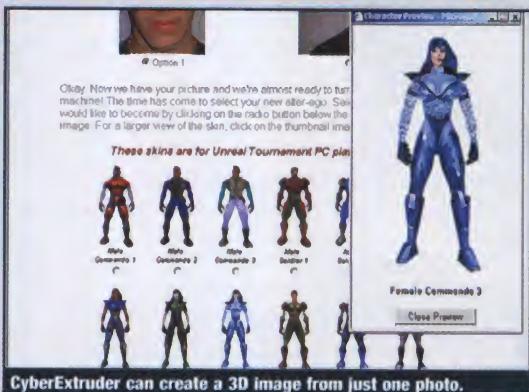
CyberExtruder can create a 3D image from just one photo.

game's characters and is manipulated via the game's software."

Compatible games are numerous. To name a few, you can insert your head into *Unreal Tournament, Quake III Arena, Tribes, Half-Life, The Sims, Star Trek: Elite Force* and more. "Really, any game that is currently 'skin-able' will work with our software," affirms Gardner. "As for other developers, we are not able to discuss pending specifics, but we're in talks with several companies."

CYBER IM

As with Digimask, CyberExtruder continues to push the technology: "We're working in a number of associated fields," declares an excited Gardner. "Probably the most exciting is the Instant Messaging arena. We are close to completing a system that will allow a user to upload a photo, create a 3D model of themselves and then plug that model into an IM

client." The end result will be a talking version of yourself, on-screen in mid-game, interacting with your friends instead of just typed-in words.

While, in the past, there have been plenty of new technology ideas that have shown promise but little substance, one positive sign of any technology

> ❝Really, any game that is currently 'skin-able' will work with our software. We can't be specific, but we are in talks with several companies❞
>
> **LARRY GARDNER, CEO AT CYBEREXTRUDER**

gaining acceptance is for large companies outside the immediate gaming industry to become interested. Take BT, for example. "We are not collaborating with anyone presently but we are excited by the potential of these technologies, which are what we call 'broadband-friendly'," says Nick Witte-Vermeulent, a graphic designer at BTopenworld. "We have recently

launched a series of online 3D chat environments designed by BTopenworld and built by US company Worlds.com that are available on our broadband portal homepage. This is already one of the most popular features of our broadband service. Now that our users are meeting each other in our worlds, we would love for them to have their own faces on their avatars!"

In fact, BT organised a demo-booth at the Millennium Dome a little while back where visitors could see their face being computerised and displayed on-screen. The American company who supplied the technology was 3Q and producing your 3D image was as simple as walking into a passport-type booth, sitting down and pressing a few buttons.

Chris Lane, CEO of 3Q (**www.3q.com**) described what games you can utilise with your personalised '3Q Clone', "They work with PC versions of *Quake III Arena, Unreal Tournament, Half-Life* and *Counter-*

HEADS – IT'S DIGIMASK

If you want a Digimask Avatar, how do you create one? Simple. You'll need a digital camera, or a means of getting photographs onto your PC, and the Launch Pad software we've included on this month's cover CD. You can also find avatars from the *PC ZONE* team that you can use for blackmail and extortion purposes

1 Take two photographs, one front face, and the other a profile shot. If possible try to pose the subject on a plain background, with neutral lighting.

2 Load the photographs into the Launch Pad software and following the on-screen instructions, place points on the face that match with those on the sample photos.
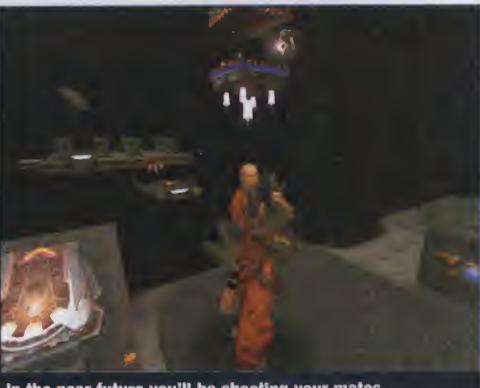
3 When you're happy, select one of the comedy hairstyles and maybe a pair of suitably goonish spectacles. Now submit your face to the Digimask server.

4 Wait a few minutes, check your email account and use the Digimask viewer to recoil at the hideous truth. The sad truth is you can't make a silk purse from a sow's ear.

Reakktor's promising online RPG, *Neocron*, isn't looking at incorporating real-life faces because of bandwidth issues.

In the near future you'll be shooting your mates.

ANOTHER LIFE

Go play with yourself somewhere else

3Q's Chris Lane sees Avatar technology taking off in a major way in the future. In fact, he sees the potential in the end product for all PC users to lead a double life – one on planet earth and one in cyberspace. "Personalising takes the multiplayer experience to the next level of realism. In these online communities you can live and experience a new existence in a parallel world, yet your character can look, move and speak like you or inherit your personal characteristics. This, in turn, leads to the cyber-community being more than just about gaming, but social interaction as well. In time, we believe your 'network browser' will actually be your cyber-clone 'carrying' your personal data."

Strike. In the future, we are looking to expand to the console platform and comply with more mass-market games such as sporting games and *The Sims*."

THE DOWNSIDE?

Of course, not all the new ideas and shiny technology get the thumbs up – even from those who quite like the idea. Take Joerg Schwiezer, developer and CEO of *Neocron: Virtual City*, a huge multiplayer game that's in the final stages of development from German outfit, Reakktor Media (**www.reakktor.com**), who says: "When we began working on *Neocron*, we considered the possibility of letting players include their own skins (for face and/or clothing) but with the way the Internet currently is, we decided against it. There were two big reasons why we did not want to let the player include his or her own textures. First, with a game that carries a possible subscriber base of 400,000 players, you'd have to download a texture set whenever you enter a new area of the game."

This means that, when there are several dozen players around, the game would need a lot of extra bandwidth just for this feature. Bandwidth is still critical (and still very expensive) so Schwiezer believes they can make better use of the available bandwidth for fluid gameplay.

"Secondly, who makes sure that the players really use their own faces and not a picture of Snoopy or Bart Simpson or even Nazi symbols and stuff like that. This means that someone always has to watch over the uploaded textures. Also, I prefer to look like

> ❝I think that modification of body and face in games is key, but it has to happen within the rules of the game... We should focus on playability aspects❞
>
> **JOERG SCHWIEZER, DEVELOPER OF *NEOCRON***

a muscle-packed Arnold in a *Quake* environment, rather than looking like an average street guy. I think that modification of body and face in games is key, but it has to happen within the rules of the game. I hate to be so negative, but I think that before we think too much about all these nifty add-on features, we should first focus on playability aspects."

A THIRD WAY

Gordon Baty, producer at BTopenworld, disagrees with that point. "The very essence of gaming and game design could easily change significantly when Avatar technology becomes a force. Sure, there's always going to be some 'win-the-crown' games like *Quake*, but we'll see a lot more of the likes of BT's own *3D Worlds* and *Phantasy Star Online* where the
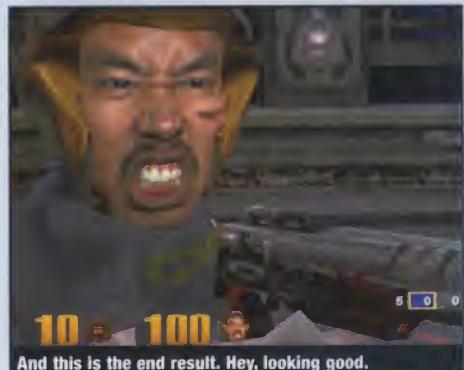
natural emphasis is collaboration, sharing, helping the newbies, ignoring the upstarts, making true communities. "You could say," reflects Baty, "that 'humanity has arrived' to populate cyberspace."

Seeing as modern PCs would have been considered supercomputers a few years ago (especially in terms of their ability to process 3D graphics), BT believes that this 3D technology and the uses for it will become a part of the PC user's everyday life, just as streaming desktop video is now. "It's a natural progression," states a confident Baty. "Avatar scanning technology has uses from biomedical applications to shopping, entertainment and, of course, online games. Broadband-friendly technology is already being made use of by many companies out there. We're making sure we understand it early. Our ADSL service allows users to really get to grips with broadband-friendly technology from Avatar technology through to online gaming. Playing online games from real-time shoot 'em ups like *Quake* to real-time strategy games like *Cataclysm*, on ADSL is incredible – the key word here in terms of broadband is real time – which depends on data coming down a fat pipe, fast."

BT believes the role-playing aspect of gaming will take on a whole new dimension. Injecting a player's personality into a game for example, makes immersive environments all the more real and compelling. "If I nuke a personalised user in *Quake*," says Baty, "I certainly feel a certain degree of satisfaction, don't you? Now it's personal!"

However, will the introduction of violence (never mind sex and drugs) being committed on the images of real people stir up more trouble in the tabloids? Will the public cry that we've finally gone too far with the goal of realism? And will the Government start taking a real interest and deal the censorship card? Hopefully not, but we'll just have to wait and see. ▪

3D photo booths like this could become commonplace.

And this is the end result. Hey, looking good.

EMOTIONAL FEEDBACK

It's really you, no really

Remember when force-feedback technologies came out? Everyone wanted one and every game had to feature it. The reason was it enhanced the gaming experience on a completely new level, giving tactile feedback to the player where before there was none. As Digimask boss Gary Bracey asks: "Why shouldn't emotional feedback lend an even greater desirability? It's one thing to see your computer character get his or her head blown off... it's another thing entirely if it's your own brains splattered on the wall!"

An Avatar displaying emotions or a man on the bog? You decide.

TALKING HEADS

We stop Bill Roper, senior producer at Blizzard, on the streets and force him to talk shop

⬤ **ASKING THE QUESTIONS** Martin Korda

Blizzard is one of the games industry's leading developers, with both the *WarCraft* and *Diablo* series selling in droves over recent years. We caught up with Blizzard's senior producer, Bill Roper, during his tour of Europe, where he's been showing off the latest builds of *WarCraft III* and *Diablo II: The Lord Of Destruction*, and grilled him about the company's past projects and future plans.

Has the online popularity of *Diablo II* measured up to your expectations?
To be honest, it's been much higher than we expected it to be. Before *Diablo II* came out, we looked at how well *Diablo* and *StarCraft* had done. We took everything into consideration and made what we thought was an aggressive estimate of how popular *Diablo II* would be online. We were blown away by how fast the game sold, and the percentage of people who played it online. It was like nothing we'd seen before and we were actually caught flat-footed.

What are the factors that have made *Diablo II* so popular online?
I think it has a lot to do with the fact that there are now many more people who are comfortable playing online than in the past. So much of *Diablo II* is based on collecting items, such as gem types and item sets. So when people played the single-player game and started collecting these things, they realised that if they were out in a community where hundreds or even thousands of other people were doing the same,

they could get access to even better items a lot more quickly than they could playing the single-player game. Another thing that actually surprised us, is that generally people buy a game, play it in single-player and then go online to play it in multiplayer. More people than ever before bought the game and immediately started playing it in multiplayer, without even playing the single-player game. Core gamers are starting to do this more often, especially with games such as *EverQuest* and *Asheron's Call*. Their entire gaming lives are based online, so when they get a game with an online component, they want to try it right away.

> **❝We were blown away by how fast *Diablo II* sold, and the percentage of people who played it online. It was like nothing we'd seen before❞**

So does this mean that you're considering making an online *Diablo* game, with a persistent universe?
If you talk to anybody in the industry, you'll find that this is kind of the Holy Grail, making a game with a persistent world, where anyone can jump in at any point and then just jump out again when they've had enough. Doing this would definitely be a shift from what we've done in the past, because if you want to do it well, you have to maintain it, even after the product shifts. This is why it makes sense for people to pay a monthly fee for a game like *EverQuest*, because you have to maintain a team of 15-20 people who work on providing new content.

It's the only way to make the experience worthwhile. It's a different model to what we've done before, and while this wouldn't necessarily scare us off, we'd have to sit down and have a look at how we could do it.

In hindsight, what would you have done differently in *Diablo II*?
I think that the biggest thing we would have done, is made it smaller. It's huge.

Why would you have made it smaller?
So it wouldn't have taken us three and a half years. When we were working on the Gold Masters, it took us 72 hours of solid testing to check out each one, to make sure it was OK to go. With *StarCraft*, this only took ten or eleven hours.

Diablo II's maximum resolution is 640x480. Do you regret using such basic-looking graphics in the game?
Not really. I think you have to look at when the game was started, we're talking about back in 1997. Early on we thought about doing some 3D stuff, there were even some Voxel versions of the game that were done. When you look at the graphics aspect of it, I think it looks really great. The big challenge was that when the game came out, 3D graphics were in vogue. This is the downside of working on the PC – everything changes in a year and a half. With *Diablo II*, we went through two of those cycles. When we started on the product, a 3D card was a rarity. When

Diablo II: it would have looked great in 1997.

NEW STATS

How many copies did this game sell?

we started it, we had no idea that the vast majority of people would have a 3D card when it shipped, which is why we didn't go down that route. However, everything we do from this point forwards will be in 3D.

Online cheating was a major problem with *Diablo*. How have you dealt with this problem in *Diablo II*?
The single biggest thing that we did was to use a client-server model, which protects all the character data. People can't go in and muck about with it. There have been a few people who've found loopholes, where we've had instances of item duplication. Fortunately, these weren't so much hacks, as people finding bugs in the code. We haven't come across any of the rampant, severe problems that we did with the original. We felt that this was the single biggest change we had to make, so that people could feel that playing online was an enjoyable and safe thing to do.

Looking back at *Diablo II*, what single feature are you most proud of?
The biggest thing that stood out for me were the skill trees. If I look at the differences between *Diablo* and *Diablo II*, I think that the development team's idea about introducing these skill trees was brilliant – the fact that you had a certain level of control over your character's destiny. In *Diablo*, you found spell books, which increased your abilities. So your skills were based on what you found. With *Diablo II*, you could

> **❝If online RPGs were made more accessible, with a simpler user interface, the genre would be even more popular than it is now❞**

experiment and try different things. It gives you so much more control, and lets you start looking forward to reaching the next skill level. It makes you play for that extra five minutes, just so you can discover that new skill. The skill trees were definitely the biggest and coolest thing that came out of *Diablo II*.

What's the next step for the RPG genre?
The refinement of multiplayer gaming. At the moment it's still a niche market, which is only really attractive to the core gamer. As it becomes more accessible and easier for people to understand, the RPG genre's popularity will really explode. If online RPGs were made more accessible, with a simpler, easier to understand user interface, the genre would become even more popular than it is now.

Would you consider branching out of the *Diablo* universe into other genres?
We've always felt that the universes we create don't have to be strictly tied to the genre from which they originated. We've already had a *WarCraft* and *StarCraft* novel, and a *Diablo* one should be out in May.

How about in terms of game genres?
I think we'd consider whatever made sense. If the development team thought it would be a good idea to make a *Diablo* strategy or FPS game, we'd certainly consider it. It would all depend on what made sense and what would be compelling.

It looks as though there's plenty to look forward to from Blizzard. Now firmly committed to 3D and with an open mind towards new gaming ideas, it's anyone's guess what they'll come up with next. For now, we can look forward to the *Diablo II* expansion pack *The Lord Of Destruction*, which is due out in June and *WarCraft III*, currently aiming for a Christmas release.

TECH HEADS

➔ GETTING TECHNICAL Martin Korda

Over the last few months I've gibbered on about various parts of this back section, but one part I haven't talked about is Dear Wandy. I'm pretty sure the majority of us (me included) haven't got that much of a clue when it comes to understanding our PCs. In fact, if you're anything like me, you find fixing your PC more daunting than defusing an atom bomb with one hand while wearing a blindfold. Which is why our own Phil Wand is so indispensable. So if you're totally stumped as to why your graphics card only displays one colour (black) or you want to know if the latest Intel Chip will work with your Super Budget Turbo Milk Float Motherboard, then just send us an email and Wandy will do his best to solve your problem. It's easy when you know how... apparently.

IN TRUBS THIS MONTH...

YOUR HOSTS

Adam Phillips | Keith Pullin | Phil Wand

CHEATMAS

Once again we bring the best cheats around to your attention...

⭐ BIG CHEAT Keith Pullin

NEED HELP?

if your problems persist, you can solve them if you...

WRITE TO **Dear Keith/Cheat Master, PC ZONE**, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5FF

EMAIL letters.pczone@dennis.co.uk with **Dear Keith** or **Cheat Master** in the subject line.

SEA DOGS
Bethesda

During a sea voyage press 'Ctrl' and 'Z' then type any of the following codes:

have live	Ship repaired and full crew
expu mne	Extra experience
deneg day	Extra cash
get me magic	Extra cannon damage
make screen shots	No cannon damage
now i flying	Fly mode. Press Ctrl and F to move camera
fire from camera	Press 0 on Numpad to shoot from camera position
teleport	Press Ctrl and L to teleport your ship to camera position

THE MUMMY
Konami

OK, it's not a great game, but you never know, there could be somebody out there

struggling...
• For all weapons collect at least 35 perfect zone gems
• For infinite ammunition collect at least 45 perfect zone gems
• To unlock the Cairo level collect at least 50 perfect zone gems
• For infinite lives collect at least 60 perfect zone gems
• To activate all cheats collect at least 78 perfect zone gems
• For invincibility collect at least 65 perfect zone gems

SETTLERS IV
BlueByte

Enter /wqsa during the game to enable the cheat mode. Now type /win to gain victory on that level. You can also speed up time by pressing 'F12'.

⬆ Find out how to settle these chaps down.

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING
Electronic Arts

Here it is, the obligatory level jump cheat that's so prominent in most first-person shooters. Go to your desired level by pressing 'Tab' to activate the chat window and then type the entire line in.

start Aeons
start Catacombs_Cisterns
start Catacombs_Cliffs
start Catacombs_Entrance
start Catacombs_Exit
start Catacombs_Exit_After
start Catacombs_LairOfLizbeth
start Catacombs_LairOfLizbethPostCU
start Catacombs_LowerLevel
start Catacombs_SaintsHall
start Catacombs_Tunnels
start Catacombs_WellRoom
start Catacombs_WindChamber

start CU_01	start CU_02
start CU_03	start CU_04
start CU_05	start CU_06
start CU_07	start CU_08
start CU_09	start CU_10
start CU_11	start CU_12
start CU_13	

start Entry
start EternalAutumn_FinalFight_Arch
start EternalAutumn_FinalFight_Arena
start EternalAutumn_FinalFight_Ruins
start EternalAutumn_Ravines_Bridge
start EternalAutumn_Ravines_Chase
start EternalAutumn_Ravines_Forest
start EternalAutumn_Transition
start Grounds_Cottage
start grounds_dock_night
start Grounds_Lighthouse

STUPID COMPETITION

Where cheating and pointlessness are qualities to be admired

So you fancy yourself as a bit of a cheat master do you? Well, here's your chance to prove it by entering our Stupid Compo. All you have to do to enter is send us your most pointless cheats. If we think your cheat is stupid enough, we'll not only print it and your name, we'll also send you the most ridiculous prize we can find in the *PC ZONE* prize cupboard. What more incentive do you need?

Please send your cheats, with the title Stupid Compo, a brief description of what they (allegedly) do, along with your name and address, to letters@pczone.co.uk.

Make sure you include all your correct details, so if you win we know where to send your special prize. Rapturous applause to Leon Theobald from Tyne And Wear who is this month's lucky winner. Leon's cheat changes aeroplanes in *Midtown Madness* into UFOs. Simply hold 'Ctrl, Alt, Shift and F7'. Then type /ufo. I think you'll agree that we've outdone ourselves with this month's prize, which is a 12in single remix of the *Homeworld Cataclysm* soundtrack, mixed by Dr Sexual (that well known artist). Time to dig out your parent's old gramophone me thinks. Enjoy.

TER

```
start Grounds_Mausoleum_Approach
start Grounds_Mausoleum_Entrance
start Grounds_Mausoleum_Tunnels
start Grounds_OldCemetery
start Manor_CentralLower
start Manor_CentralLower_After
start Manor_CentralLower_night
start Manor_CentralLower_storm
start Manor_CentralUpper
start Manor_CentralUpper_After
start Manor_CentralUpper_storm
start Manor_Chapel
start Manor_Chapel_night
start Manor_Crypt
start Manor_EastWingLower
start Manor_EastWingLower_After
start Manor_EastWingLower_night
start Manor_EastWingUpper
start Manor_EastWingUpper_After
start Manor_EastWingUpper_night
start Manor_EntranceHall
start Manor_EntranceHall_FromKitch
start Manor_EntranceHall_Intro
start Manor_EntranceHall_Night
start Manor_EntranceHall_Storm
start Manor_EntranceHall_ToKitch
start Manor_FrontGate
start Manor_FrontGate_night
```

```
start Manor_FrontGate_Night_Return
start Manor_Gardens
start Manor_Gardens_night
start Manor_Gardens_storm
start Manor_GreatHall_night
start Manor_GreatHall_Storm
start Manor_InnerCourtyard
start Manor_InnerCourtyard_Storm
start Manor_NorthWingLower
start Manor_NorthWingLower_After
start Manor_NorthWingLower_night
start Manor_NorthWingLower_storm
start Manor_NorthWingUpper
start Manor_NorthWingUpper_night
start Manor_NorthWingUpper_storm
start Manor_PatricksRoom
start Manor_TowerRun_night
start Manor_TowerRun_storm
start Manor_WestWing
start Manor_WestWing_Hall1
start Manor_WestWing_Night
start Manor_WidowsWatch_storm
start Monastery_Past_Church
start Monastery_Past_Exterior
start Monastery_Past_Interior
start Monastery_Past_LivingQuarters
start Monastery_Present_Church
start Monastery_Present_Cove
```

```
start Monastery_Present_Entrance
start Monastery_Present_Tunnels
start Oneiros_Amphitheater
start Oneiros_City1
start Oneiros_City2
start Oneiros_HowlingWell
start Oneiros_Intro
start Oneiros_Oracle
start Oneiros_RetreatBath
start Oneiros_RetreatExterior
start Oneiros_RetreatSecondFloor
start Oneiros_RetreatStudio
start Oneiros_ZigguratInterior
start Oneiros_ZigguratLower
start Oneiros_ZigguratUpper
start PiratesCove_Barracks
start PiratesCove_Exterior
start PiratesCove_Pier
start PiratesCove_Pool
start PiratesCove_TreasureRoom
start playground
start SmokeTest
start StandingStones_FirstVisit
start StandingStones_KingFight
start start
```

CLEOPATRA (PHARAOH EXPANSION PACK)
Impressions

With each of these cheats press and hold 'Ctrl, Alt, Shift and C' during the game and type the following code…

Jail Break	Tomb raiders appear
Hail to the Chief	Hailstorm appears
Crop Busters	A swarm of locusts eat all crops
Amphibious Assault	A plague of frogs descend upon your city
Ancient Astronauts	Pyramids develop quicker
Crimson Tide	River turns to blood
Mummys Revenge	Mummies appear from monuments and attack the city

STARSHIP TROOPERS
Hasbro

• To increase the amount of experience your troopers gain after each battle, go to the 'stta\units' directory and open the 'st_db_attr' file in notepad. Go to line 26, which should look something like '26 1 0 0 15 0 0 1'. Change this so it reads '26 1 0 0 200 0 0 1'. If you like you can experiment with other values besides 200 if you want your troopers' experience to increase.

• There's also a file hack for extra equipment. Just go to the Starship Trooper directory and then dive into the mission directory. Go to each mission directory in turn and look for 'interface.txt' files. Open the file, change the values from 3 to 12 or 18. A word of warning though, if you change the value in one file the rest of the files must be changed as well, otherwise the game will crash. **PCZ**

DEAR KEITH

The world's a nicer place with *Keith Pullin* solving your gaming conundrums

IF YOU DON'T EAT YOUR MEAT

Q Holy cow – he will not learn. I'm talking about *Black & White*, of course. My lovely bovine creature simply won't eat his dinner. But worse still, whenever I slap him for doing something wrong he gets confused and stops doing the stuff I want him to. If he's confused, I'm doubly confused. Please help.

Mark Smith, Colchester

A Well, the answer can be found on the many signposts dotted around the landscape, but the simplest way to get him to eat is to stroke his belly while he has food in his hand. With regards to your other problem, you just have to make sure you slap or stroke him directly after the action he has just performed. If you wait, your creature will be thinking about something else entirely.

CHECK OUT THIS GRASS

Q I'm playing *Serious Sam* and I've reached Moon Mountain. I can see some +200 armour floating in mid-air but I don't know how to reach it. If you could tell me what the score is here I would be very grateful.

Alan Oakes, email

A Just walk around the edge of the ledge until you find the right spot and you'll trigger a secret catapult. This should shoot the armour up onto the grassy platform for you. It's simple my friend.

TRAPPED AIR

Q I've been playing *Insane* online and I have a really nasty problem where my van keeps shooting up into the air and flipping over really badly. I think this might have something to do with my bad lag but I'm not sure because computers do my head in. Is there a way to avoid this?

Max The Plumber, Westbourne

A Your problem really is that you're just crap. You can always get yourself a faster modem or something along those lines, but when it comes to the actual driving you just need to take more care. Slowing down sometimes helps because that way you stay on the ground more and retain better control over your van. That's about all I can offer you, sadly.

ARKING ABOUT

Q Apparently there's a bonus stage on *Indiana Jones And The Infernal Machine* but I've got absolutely no idea where to find it. Could you please tell me? Thanks.

Mark Snow, Richmond

A All you need to do is amass more than $2,500 worth of treasure. When you've done this you gain access to a special Peruvian bonus stage based on *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*. Hope you enjoy it Mark.

TROUBLE WITH YOUR WATER

Q I've got *Hostile Waters* and to be frank, I'm not really sure of the best way to attack an island. I've tried a lot of strategies but I must be missing the point because I usually end up trounced pretty darn quickly. Can you help me, esteemed cheat maestro?

Lionel Fish, email

A Well, after studying advanced island strategies for a number of years at cheat school I can reveal the following. First and foremost, stay out of the enemy's field of vision and take out any target you see along the way. If you come upon multiple gun emplacements, manoeuvre your vehicle into position behind one of these emplacements to protect yourself. Continue in this fashion and you should be OK.

Hostile intentions, indeed.

DEAR WANDY

It's time for *Wandy* to wave his magic rod again. At a stroke, he pumps forth the seeds of knowledge and, um... let's just get to the letters

● **WEIRDO** Phil Wand

✪ TThe I-Will KK266-R is the best motherboard (a lot) of money can buy.

ROLL YOUR OWN

Q I currently have an ageing PC: a Viglen Homepro PII 350 with a Voodoo2 card. Though it can still run all the games currently available, I would like a much faster machine to play new games at a decent speed. The trouble is, I don't have the slightest clue as to how to upgrade a computer – I don't know what a BIOS does, what a motherboard does, what fans I would need, and so on. All the parts I want are in your Buyer's Guide, but I'm hoping you could refer me to a good Internet site or book that explains exactly what needs to be done and how. I have a budget of around £650, and I'm hoping to upgrade to an AMD Athlon 1.2GHz, IBM Deskstar 75GXP 30Mb, Videologic Vivid! 32Mb graphics card, and whichever motherboard I need.
Michael Xu

A There are a few books aimed at upgrading your PC, but many are out of date as soon as they're written. But, I'd still highly recommend Morris Rosenthal's excellent *Build Your Own PC* available from Amazon.co.uk for £15.99. While we're on the subject, let's give you a quick rundown on PC internals. You should easily be able to build a respectable machine with your £650 budget. The best motherboards for the AMD Athlon are currently the Asus, Abit and I-Will boards based on the VIA KT133A chipset, although the latter is a rather expensive option – see our Buyer's Guide (p112) for the best buy if you can afford the top end. They support UDMA100, so the new breed of hard drives really fly, and when you feel brave enough, there are a whole host of fine-tuning options in the BIOS. If you're serious about your kit, have a look at the tech-head's wet dream: www.overclockers.co.uk.

TINY TROUBLE

Q I've had my Tiny PC for a year, and the other day I had to red-button the thing after a serious crash. I restarted it, waited for it to boot up, and then discovered I had to reinstall *Half-Life* so I could play *Counter-Strike* online. Then the machine starts claiming that I don't have enough RAM. Strange, I think, because I have 128Mb on the board. So I opened the System control panel and it confirms that I have just 16Mb RAM installed. I rang up Tiny tech support and, after being passed from person to person, I didn't really get anywhere. My PC is an Intel Pentium III 450MHz with a 13Gb hard drive and a 16Mb graphics card.
Craig Zadoroznyj

A The most reliable way to check the amount of memory you have is to watch the start-up screen when you first turn the machine on. The BIOS will do a quick check of things such as memory and hard drives before starting to load the operating system. If it's reporting 16Mb, shut down your machine and remove and reset the memory chips. You don't say how your 128Mb memory is made up, but if it's with multiple chips, it might be worth trying them one at a time, restarting the PC, and then seeing what the BIOS reports. It's possible Tiny has screwed up when changing components to fix your machine. I'd give up on the calls and try a registered letter. It's cheaper, and not so easily ignored.

LAND LUBBER

Q After reading your review of *Sea Dogs*, I have tried to obtain a copy. Alas, all I get in all the game stores I visited is: "Sorry, mate, never heard of it." Please, please can you tell me where I can buy a copy in the UK?
Dan

A Tricky one. Normally, a search at the Special Reserve Discount Network at ukpcgames.com reveals every game imaginable. This time, *Sea Dogs* drew a big blank. I then tried Amazon.co.uk, who are becoming increasingly involved with the games scene, and again was faced with no suitable matches. At Gameplay (www.gameplay.com) I found the server was playing up, so I moved quickly on to Game, who also had never heard of the game. Luckily – but it depends how desperate you are – Bethsoft.com lists the game for US$39.00, but be prepared to pay a hefty shipping charge of at least US$25.

CABLE AND CHIPS

Q Can you tell me why NTL is taking so long to get cable to my area? I thought the existing cables were already there and they just needed to upgrade the exchange. Can you investigate? Also, do you agree with the rumour that some Athlon chips are the same – just clocked differently? For instance, you can't over-clock a 1.2GHz chip much, but you can with, say, an 800MHz chip. I think my Athlon 900MHz and a 1GHz Athlon are basically the same chip but clocked differently as standard. Can you explain to me the difference between what's inside an 800 chip and a 1.2 chip? I think readers should know if we are being fleeced here! I had the same GeForce2 GTS problem on my K6-550 you mentioned a few

issues back. It wasn't running much better than my Voodoo 2. It turns out that you were spot on. The problem lay with my chip. The K6 is rather poor at floating point, and really bottlenecks the GeForce's abilities in 3D games.
Kieran

A Don't get Cable and ADSL confused. ADSL uses the BT cable you already have plumbed into your home. The wire in question is rather old, and in some places BT used aluminium instead of copper as it was cheaper at the time: aluminium is great for making planes but it's a poor conductor of electricity. Cable Internet as provided by NTL uses its own network of wires, same as Cable TV. If it hasn't been round to dig up your road, you can't have it. As for the processors, it's cheaper for AMD and Intel to gear up their production to make the fastest chip possible than it is have multiple production lines for different chips. The problem for them is that production techniques are getting so good, that a large

> **"Why is NTL taking so long to come to my area? I thought the cables were there"**
>
> KIERAN, CONFUSING CABLE WITH ADSL

percentage of new processors are capable of high speeds. Seeing as they still need to have CPUs for entry level machines, they simply down-clock fast ones – meaning many cheaper machines actually have a high-grade processor inside them, only one with its balls cut off. Quite often a 900MHz chip is actually a 1GHz chip with the multiplier locked at nine instead of ten (if you unlock the multiplier you can run it as nature intended). Quite clearly this isn't without risk: first you need to cool the chip, and you'll also invalidate your warranty. In most cases your PC will start playing up and crashing before you cause any permanent damage, so you can simply turn it off and change it back.
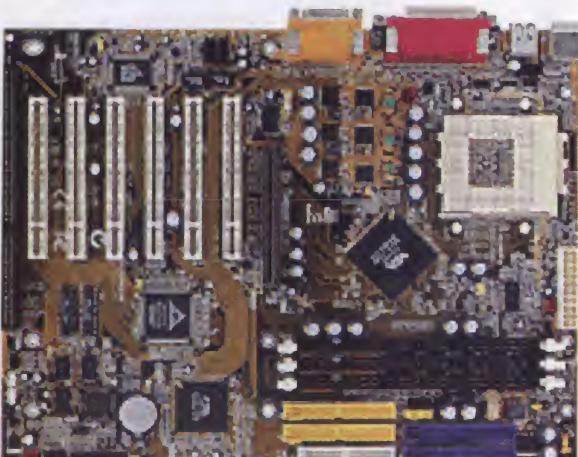
❷ Stops heat and chafing troubles.

LOCK 'EM UP

Q I'll get right to the point. I've got a problem with my computer. What happens is, after about 30 minutes within Windows or certain games, the computer stops dead. The keyboard and mouse lock up but the CD music continues. My computer has a Gigabyte GA-5AA motherboard with K62-500MHz and a TNT2 AGP graphics card. Everything has the latest drivers and the motherboard has the AGP patch. Any ideas on a solution? The other thing I wanted to ask was: what's the typical connection speed from a standard 56K modem? I'm getting pings in TFC of about 355, and a download rate of anything between 2 and 4 KB/second. Is this bad?

Maddog

A From the sounds of things, your machine may be running a bit warm. Check that the heat-sink on your processor has a nice thin wipe of heat-sink compound on it – that horrible white stuff that gets everywhere. If not, you can buy it from most electrical shops such as www.maplin.co.uk, or more specialist PC places such as www.dabs.com. While you're inside the case, check the heat-sink fan is turning freely and doesn't feel loose or 'gritty'. If it does, a new fan and heat-sink unit costs under a tenner. The CD music isn't affected by this as the CD is simply feeding an audio signal directly to the soundcard, and the soundcard is routing it to your speakers with no processing power involved.

As for your ping, well, if you can still hit things keep plugging. But I'd be looking for a different server or ISP if I couldn't get below 200ms. At home I use the Games-World.net (GWN) dial-up available from www.games-world.net and play on the *PC ZONE* servers. Given that GWN host our machines, the ping from a humble 56K modem is quite respectable, and the games eminently playable.

BOO HOO BRIO

Q I bought a Hewlett Packard Brio BA600 550MHz last year. It came with a Matrox MGA 200 integrated into the motherboard. I recently purchased an NVIDIA TNT2 M64 and found that there was no AGP slot or PCI slot at all, meaning I can't plug it in. Is there any way I can upgrade my graphics card or processor without having to buy a new case or motherboard?

Paul

A Populating a free slot is the only way you can upgrade without changing the main board. Accessory slots are scarce inside the Brio 600. Considering the machine has a backward video card, Hewlett-Packard is remiss in not providing support for users wishing to pump up the machine's performance. According to our research, it has a total of three PCI slots and one ISA, and no support for AGP. In simpler terms, you need a new motherboard to use the latest video hardware. **PCZ**

❶ HP Brio 600: very little room for expansion. Beware.

WANDY SAYS THANKS

Many thanks to all the readers who wrote in with a solution to the Microsoft Defrag stalling problems in Windows 95 and 98. The simplest suggestion, it would seem, is to restart your machine in Safe Mode. Press the F8 key when the Starting Windows message appears and then run it from there. Hey presto, smooth run.

WATCHDOG

Is BT the devil incarnate? Judging from the rants we've had from readers, there are some out there who think so

⭐ **MR FIX-IT** Adam Phillips

DABS DEBACLE

Q I bought an Abit KT7 from Dabs.com at the end of September last year. It's a great motherboard and at the time the quick service from Dabs was good. The problems started in January when the board failed to boot. I phoned Dabs and the techie said the problems indicated a possible problem with the system timer and gave me a returns authorisation number.

I sent it back on January 31 and included a covering letter which I also emailed to Dabs. I didn't get any form of acknowledgement from them, so I phoned and was told that the board had been returned to Abit so they could repair it (the returns procedure is laid out in Dabs' terms and conditions.) I was told this would take between four and six weeks.

I argued that this was not good customer service and surely not good economic sense, as the cost of the return and subsequent investigation of the fault would probably cost more than the board was worth. The person on the phone, who was polite and helpful, said she would mark the case 'urgent' to speed things up.

Since then I have phoned several times to check on the progress (or lack of) on my board. I'm getting rather angry as the four to six weeks deadline has passed and I'm now looking at two months without my board.

Sean O'Connell

A Dabs tells us that they have investigated your query "and he has now received his repaired motherboard. We have checked with Parcel Force that the delivery was accepted by Mr O'Connell. It was delivered on March 29 at 16.45 and signed for by Mr O'Connell."

They say that the repair was offered under the warranty terms and they accept that four to six weeks is quite a long time, "but once goods have been sent back to the manufacturers, although we follow up, it is to some extent out of our control. We are working hard with our suppliers and manufacturers to improve these service levels for customers."

PIRATES LOOK OUT!

Q Can you give me the telephone number for the people who crack down on software piracy? I'd like to help games developers by giving info on a couple of people in my area who make vast amounts of money selling copies of PC and PlayStation software, as well as VCD, MP3 and other stuff. Is there any reward for giving information on these people?

'Chuckie Egg'

A There is such an enforcement agency and it's run by the European Leisure Software Publishers Association. Punters can phone ELSPA's 24-hour hotline and stop those dastardly types who are leeching off the software industry. The number is 0990 133 405 or you can fill in an online report at www.elspa.com/pirac/crimeunit.html.

As for a reward, they don't offer one unfortunately because they are a trading association. You may be able to glean one though if you report the crime to Crimestoppers – you can reach them on 0800 555 111 or via their website at www.crimestoppers-uk.org/. They will then pass on your info to the ELSPA Crime Unit and if a successful conviction is brought about because of your information, then you could be in for a reward.

Piracy rampant in your area? Call ELSPA's Crime Unit.

ADSL STRAIGHT OUT OF HELL

SPECIAL

After inviting readers to send in their comments about BT's ADSL service, we were flooded with emails. Here's a selection…

A Watchdog reader, yesterday.

The Outrage

Q "Pings between 70 and 600 on *Counter-Strike*. And that's when the server is in a good mood. Web pages not appearing. Emails taking ages. It took eight hours for one mail to reach me. Intermittent service outages. Poor technical support that we pay for. We are beta testing a crap service and paying £39.99 a month for the pleasure!"

Matthew Watkins

Q "I would just like to say that for £40 a month I expect to be treated like an emperor. The rubbish service from BTopenworld does not even come close. Once you disconnect, it is next to impossible to reconnect, and if you do manage to get a connection, it's just a null one – you can't transfer anything. I'm sure you've had complaints about the lag/spikes you get when playing online games so I won't go any further. I am a very unhappy BTopenworld customer."

Sajeds

A Watchdog asked BT to respond to these points. "Implementing ADSL has been a major learning experience for us, as indeed it has for all other ISPs around the world," says a spokesperson for the company. "As with any new technology, we have regrettably experienced some problems. When these occur, we endeavour to fix them as soon as possible. However, because of the complexity of ADSL and the number of suppliers involved, just finding the problem can sometimes be a challenge. Despite this, we now have some 25,000 customers connected, and a recent survey carried out by an independent market research company showed that 78 per cent were happy with the service overall."

As for the pricing issues, BT reckons it offers all-round value for money at competitive prices. "In a recent independent survey of our customer base, three-quarters said they were satisfied with value for money," the company says. They also point out that an average-to-high usage narrowband user with a second line is already likely to be paying around £40 per month for Internet access anyway.

In terms of gaming problems, BT says the issue of an intermittent

increase in 'ping' times was reported in January and investigated extensively by their technical team. "After a breakthrough, where the problem could be reproduced in a controlled environment," it says, "a solution to the problem was tested with encouraging early signs. After a period of further testing, the solution was implemented on our platform at the beginning of March. We are unaware of any further problems." Readers still experiencing problems should send Watchdog an email with *exact* details for us to pass on to BT for further investigation.

THE ACCUSATIONS
We also received a lengthy email from J Clifford Hetherington who outlined in detail what he feels is wrong with the service. Many of his thoughts are echoed by other complaints sent in to us.

Clifford Hetherington: Mail servers are continually faulty and deliver mail anywhere between six hours and 18 days after posting. News servers suffer almost as much as the mail servers.

"The majority of emails are sent and received in seconds, however, we, like all ISPs, have experienced problems with mail servers. These problems are not common occurrences and we endeavour to fix them as soon as possible and keep our customers fully informed. The same systems are used for both news and mail servers."

Clifford Hetherington: BTopenworld support lacks either the expertise or will to deal properly with customer complaints about service outages.

"The Technical Support Desk plays a key part in identifying service outages and communicating these to customers. Once a service outage has been identified, the team is kept fully informed of progress so that they, in turn, are able to proactively communicate to customers (via newsgroups, service status line and front end telephone messages that customers hear before entering the Technical Helpdesk) and

66 For £40 a month I expect to be treated like an emperor. The rubbish service from BTopenworld does not even come close 99
SAJEDS, "A VERY UNHAPPY BTOPENWORLD CUSTOMER"

respond to any customer queries."

Clifford Hetherington: The 0845 support number is often out of order, busy, or so clogged with calls that it can take in excess of 45 minutes to access support, only to be put on hold for another 20 minutes or disconnected and left to queue again.

"The 0845 support number has never been out of order. When calls queue beyond 600 seconds, an engaged tone is given to subsequent callers. When no calls have been held longer than 600 seconds, calls are then allowed into the queue. We have recently quadrupled

the staffing levels at our Helpdesk in order to provide better technical support. We do our best to keep our customers fully informed at all times, via the service status area on our portals (located under 'Help'), our free 24-hour freephone number (0800 169 0199) and our new service status newsgroup btopenworld. broadband.announce."

Clifford Hetherington: The Alcatel USB modem is admitted by Alcatel to be faulty in that it draws more than 500mA in many cases. Alcatel has yet to write fully functional drivers for its modem. Users are therefore forced to reboot their PCs at irregular intervals as the

modem/drivers cause lock-ups. This equipment caused problems in the later stages of BTO's trials as did its so-called transparent proxy. The trials in the main used equipment now used by the business service BTO provide… ethernet routers.

"Alcatel do not admit that the modem they provide is faulty – it was recently praised by *The Sunday Times* as one of the best in the world. There have been problems with USB power consumption. These have been caused by a variety of reasons, including faulty modems and badly designed computers belonging to our

customers. We carried out extensive trials of the USB-based service during 2000. These trials were hugely successful. The vast majority of customers have experienced no problems with the USB interface."

Clifford Hetherington: Users are 'tied' to Alcatel's modems by BTO who threaten to withdraw service if 'BTO-supplied modems are not used'. This is despite the existence of Alcatel PCI ADSL modems that have no USB problems, as do Fujitsu who also supply BT Ignite with equipment.

"The BTopenworld service includes a compatible modem and/or router. This has minimised the massive problems experienced in the United States and elsewhere of compatibility with the various elements of an ADSL-based service. We are developing an interface, available later this year, which will offer a wider choice of modems to customers."

Clifford Hetherington: BTO's attitude to customers is little short of contemptuous with respect to dealing with customers asking for compensation after several hours to several days of service outages. Users are told that BTO's terms and conditions say that they don't guarantee the service. Only complaints to Oftel result in BTO acknowledging a customer complaint and a request for compensation. BTO themselves have to be

A BT spokesperson, yesterday.

led kicking and screaming into any such offer.

"The highly complex and technical nature of the service means that it is impossible to guarantee service. BTopenworld takes customer complaints seriously and will deal with them in a manner it believes appropriate in the light of the circumstances. Each case is investigated thoroughly and a response is provided to the customer. Where appropriate, we will make a goodwill payment."

Watchdog says: While we understand that any new technology is going to experience growing pains, judging from the amount of emails we have received on this subject, we still have concerns about the service. The best way to tackle any bugbears with this evolving service is for readers to keep us informed of their experiences with BTO over the next few months.

⊕ Quite a number of you think BTopenworld's service is rubbish.

SCORES

Teams		Frags	Deaths	Ping
TERRORIST (6 players)	WINS = 0			617
The Dude		1	1	824
Nameless One	DEAD	1	1	616
Shoktepgo	DEAD	1	1	21
Tall Head	DEAD	0	1	115
D Chicken	DEAD	0	1	1217
ied chicken	DEAD	0	1	620
CT (6 players)	WINS = 0			515
Kill The Cat (bye Ken)		1	0	916
Rootless Killer		1	0	621
gtmp	DEAD	1	1	312
Furball	DEAD	1	1	120
Earache (Bye Ken)	DEAD	1	1	79
Solid Snake Pimp Update v1..		0	0	1213

Many of you say high pings are all too common with BTopenworld.

SITES FOR SORE EYES

Gaming help is never far away on the good old Internet...

⊙ **LOST AND FOUND** Keith Pullin

Sometimes there just isn't enough space in a magazine to do a walkthrough justice. So, we offer you the next best thing – a list of the best places to go on the Internet. Just let your browser do the hard work and then the rest is easy.

MESSIAH

⊙ **Issue** #75 **Score** 85%
http://titan.spaceports.com/~fax/fin/messiah.htm

Not the most visually stimulating site, but you should be able to content yourself with a couple of downloadable walkthroughs, one of which is extremely thorough. You'll also find a full list of cheats here, so it's not too shabby really.

↑ Get ready to be saved with a full list of *Messiah* cheats.

KLINGON ACADEMY

⊙ **Issue** #93 **Score** 69%
http://www.gameserver.com/walkthroughs/klingon.htm

Highly detailed, but also hideously dull, this walkthrough is a comprehensive guide that covers each mission thoroughly. If you can put up with the lack of colour then this walkthrough is the one to use if you're struggling to live up to your role as a Klingon Commander.

BLAIR WITCH: VOLUME 2

⊙ **Issue** #98 **Score** 68%
http://blairwitch.godgames.com/walkt_vol2.htm

You could do a lot worse than visit this official site to find help for this game. On top of the walkthrough there's a vast selection of tips. If none of that helps, you can check out the FAQ pages or ask for advice on the forums.

↑ This official *Blair Witch* site has pretty much everything you'll need.

DIABLO 2

⊙ **Issue** #93 **Score** 72%
http://www.diablo2.com

If you can't find what you need here then you never will. Full quest walkthroughs, information on items, profiles of characters and loads more make this essential browsing for all *Diablo 2* fans. Some parts of the site may require a password, but it's free to register, so what the hell. Top quality stuff.

↑ Essential browsing for all *Diablo 2* fans.

DEUS EX

⊙ **Issue** #93 **Score** 94%
http://www.deus-ex.org/help/walkthrough/

One of the most detailed walkthroughs we've ever seen. If you're stuck then you're almost guaranteed to find the answer here. Easy to follow, if a little text-heavy, this walkthrough is divided into simple-to-follow parts, that cover every chapter of the game. A must-read if you're stuck.

↑ If you're after a nice, easy to follow guide, look no further.

FINAL FANTASY VII

⊙ **Issue** #87 **Score** 83%
http://www.metalheads.co.uk/ff7guide/

This has to be the ultimate *FFVII* guide. Here you will find help on getting started, battle techniques, all of the game's secrets as well as maps and walkthroughs. For the completely baffled player there's also a selection of cheats. Well presented and very concise – an excellent site.

↑ A brilliant site that should help you on your *Final Fantasy* quest.

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE

⊙ **Issue** #84 **Score** 88%
http://www.lucasarts.com/products/indy/

There are a few text-only walkthroughs around, but this official webpage is the only one with cheats and screenshots of specific trouble spots. At the moment the guide is unfinished,

↑ Nice work Indy.

but it is slowly being updated and is worth checking up on regularly.

NOCTURNE

⊙ **Issue** #84 **Score** 86%
http://www.3dactionplanet.com/spookhouse/

This remarkable site contains cheats, walkthroughs, interviews, downloads and goodies galore. More of a resource page than a simple cheats page, The Spookhouse even covers info on *Nocturne 2*. Everything it does is done well and it's worth a visit even if you haven't got the game.

↑ A superb site that's worth checking out whether you're a fan or not.

DUNGEON KEEPER 2

⊙ **Issue** #79 **Score** 94%
http://custom.bellaonline.com/computers/strategylib_dk_2walk.shtml

A well laid-out site that is easy to navigate and hugely informative. Each level is covered individually, and while some of the descriptions are a little on the brief side, they provide more than enough information to help you complete

the level. There's also a load of cheats and hints to help you out.

BALDUR'S GATE

⊙ **Issue** #73 **Score** 85%
http://www.cyberjag.com/baldur/baldurhm.htm

What a fantastic resource page. This site contains dozens of links to every conceivable piece of information about the game. There are character editors, maps, charts, tables, assorted adventuring methods – the list goes on. Bookmark this page now – you won't need any other.

↑ If *Baldur's Gate* is your thing head to this page – now.

The *Klingon Academy* walkthrough is thorough, but it's also quite dull.

PCZONE TOP 100

Welcome to the definitive buyer's guide for all discerning PC gamers. The games that grace these pages represent the best titles across all genres. Check here for regular updates

This is the *PC ZONE* Top 100. Within it you will find the best games you can currently buy for your PC. All the games here deserve a place in our illustrious Top 100 as we go to print, but that could all change next month when newer titles come in and older games receive new ratings to reflect where they stand in the great scheme of things. Shrewd buyers will always check here first before parting with their money.

⊗ Benchmark titles are the games you simply must have if you are a fan of the genre. They are considered by the *PC ZONE* team to be absolute Classics and should be bought without hesitation. All new games are compared to their genre's benchmark title when they are reviewed. Bear this in mind before writing into Mailbox complaining that the latest 3D shooter didn't automatically get 90 per cent: check here first to see what it's up against! Additionally, all games in that genre will receive a new rating every time a new benchmark title comes along.

NEW ENTRY

⊗ In the wonderful world of PC gaming, new titles come in every month, some of which are better than the games currently in the Top 100. When this happens, they will gain their rightful place in the Top 100 and lesser titles will drop out to make room for them.

BUDGET GAME

⊗ If a game in the Top 100 is available on budget, it will be tagged accordingly. Games that are lower in price than other titles in their genre do not necessarily receive a new score to reflect this. The latest score the game received will still apply – it's up to you to decide whether or not the game is worth buying at its new price point.

PCZONE BENCHMARK GAME

WHEN WE SAY CLASSIC, WE MEAN IT

Under the *ZONE* scoring system, new games will have to be pretty spectacular to receive this award. They will have to take their genre to unprecedented new heights and represent a major step forward for PC gaming. There are only a few titles that can justifiably be described as *PC ZONE* Classics. This trend will continue across all genres. Generally speaking, all *ZONE* Classics are must-have titles – the benchmark title being the definitive game of the genre – but that does not mean you should discount games that score 80+ per cent. These games receive the *PC ZONE* Award For Excellence and are essential buys if you are a fan of the genre the game fits into. Classics, on the other hand, are games we think will appeal to everyone and will bring new fans to that particular genre. There will not be many of them, but when we say a game is a Classic, we mean it.

Z PCZONE CLASSIC

FIRST-PERSON SHOOTERS

HALF-LIFE

PCZ #71 · 95%

❂ Taking the first-person shooter as its starting point, *Half-Life* redefines the genre with an engrossing story, cracking atmosphere and some of the best AI ever coded. *Half-Life* is probably still the best game you can install on your PC, and it's now available with the superb *Opposing Force* add-on in the *Generations* pack.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

BUDGET GAME

UNREAL TOURNAMENT   PCZ #81 · 90%

❂ Played over a network or the Internet, *Unreal Tournament* is more than a match for *Quake III*'s multiplayer, with a combination of well-designed maps and diverse gameplay. The single-player mode might be too short, but it' s still going to be more than a challenge for most.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 020 7738 8188

QUAKE III ARENA   PCZ #87 · 89%

❂ The biggest brand name in PC gaming is back. The sheer speed, intensity and unrelenting action of *Quake III* make it an essential purchase for all shoot 'em up fans, but sadly the lack of variety prevents it from topping *Unreal Tournament*.
PUBLISHER Activision • 0990 143 525

CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING   PCZ #101 · 85%

❂ This atmospheric game is one of the most unsettling FPSs we've seen. The graphics and superb sound will have you leaping out of your seat. Here's hoping Barker's contribution will help push the future of narrative and gameplay forward.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

GUNMAN CHRONICLES   PCZ #97 · 84%

❂ While comparisons to *Half-Life* are inevitable, *Gunman* contains more than enough nuances to stand out on its own merits. With a superb array of weapons, intense battles and a gripping atmosphere it's a must have for any fan of the genre.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

PROJECT IGI   PCZ #97 · 84%

❂ Combining the action of *Soldier Of Fortune* with the stealth of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Project IGI* is the thinking man's FPS. It features vast, open landscapes, and its clever changes of pace and espionage oriented storyline will keep you engrossed throughout.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE   PCZ #94 · 84%

❂ The first single-player game to use the *Quake III* engine, *Voyager* offers enough thrills to please even the hardest of Trekkie haters. A new scripting system and some clever CPU team mates give renewed credence to solo play in this increasingly multiplayer genre.
PUBLISHER Activision • 0990 143 525

SERIOUS SAM   PCZ #102 · 81%

❂ Serious Sam is a game that's seriously good fun. You get more monsters than you could ever wish for – they come out of the walls, the floor, pretty much everywhere. A good old fashioned, arcade-style shooter, with a liberal dose of humour.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

MECHWARRIOR 4: VENGEANCE   PCZ #99 · 80%

❂ This fourth offering in the popular combat series is a feast of superb graphics, challenging missions and er... realistic snow. The multiplayer option is great and features some excellent team-based modes, but like all big robot games, it's still only likely to sell in the US.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 5700 2000

BUDGET GAME

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE   PCZ #88 · 80%

❂ The original *Thief* set new standards in FPS titles with its move away from mindless action towards stealth and its excellent use of light and sound. This sequel delivers more of the same quality gameplay, minus the out-of-place zombie levels.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

STRATEGY

BLACK & WHITE

PCZ #100 · 95%

❂ One of our joint top games of all time, *Black & White* is worth the hype and more. Hundreds of challenges through wondrous landscapes, packed full of spectacular AI enhanced creatures and some genuinely original ideas. Sell your friends and family if you have to, but get a copy of this game. Pure genius.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

Z: STEEL SOLDIERS   PCZ #101 · 90%

❂ *Z* will re-ignite your passion for strategy games with its fast paced in-yer-face action that allows you to get down and dirty from the off. The AI is superb, and as it's entirely mouse driven, it's simple and easy to get into. What more could you ask for?
PUBLISHER EON • 0700 4366344

SHOGUN: TOTAL WAR   PCZ #89 · 90%

❂ Command enormous armies in epic and bloody battles, send ninjas to assassinate generals and conquer your way through the map of feudal Japan. The 3D engine works beautifully and the in-game options don't get in the way of instant playability. *Shogun* will blow you away.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

COSSACKS: EUROPEAN WARS   PCZ #101 · 89%

❂ There are 8,000 troops at your disposal in this historically accurate RTS. Smooth unit movement and a 3D landscape with real physics modelling make it truly absorbing. With great graphics and sound effects to boot it's an essential purchase.
PUBLISHER CDV • 020 8880 4144

AOE: COLLECTORS' EDITION   PCZ #84 · 88%

❂ It might not be radically different from the original, but sometimes evolution is just as good as revolution. In *AOEII*, the gameplay is honed to perfection with balanced units and strong single and multiplayer campaigns. Forget the hype of *Tiberian Sun* and try this classic RTS.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 5700 2000

GROUND CONTROL   PCZ #92 · 86%

❂ RTSs are increasingly dropping resource management in order to concentrate on strategy. *Ground Control* pulls this off with flair, gorgeous looks and a brilliant camera. If you're after a 3D strategy title but don't fancy samurais, this is the answer.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

CALL TO POWER II   PCZ #98 · 85%

❂ *Civilization II* is one of the best games of all time, but that doesn't mean it doesn't need updating. It might not have the official *Civ* endorsement, but *Call To Power II* still retains the spirit of the game, while polishing almost every aspect of the gameplay.
PUBLISHER Activision • 0990 143525

SUDDEN STRIKE   PCZ #96 · 85%

❂ Sudden Strike mixes WWII action with a heavy dose of realism in order to create a compelling RTS. Its clever resource management, huge selection of units and separate campaigns make it a must for RTS fans looking for something a bit different.
PUBLISHER CDV • 020 8880 4144

HOMEWORLD: CATACLYSM   PCZ #96 · 85%

❂ Relic's mission to improve the already superb 3D RTS Homeworld has proved to be a great success. The *Homeworld* universe has been expanded, providing a more elaborate storyline and greater scope for tactical options than its predecessor.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

ZEUS: MASTER OF OLYMPUS   PCZ #97 · 83%

❂ From the creators of *Pharaoh* and *Caesar III* comes this intricate yet hugely playable micro-management god game. It is hugely addictive, but suffers slightly from its lack of multiplayer options and a poor combat system.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

➡

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES

DEUS EX

PCZ #93 · 94%

Warren Spector takes the finer elements of *Half-Life*, *System Shock 2* and *Thief* and weaves an RPG of complex beauty that revolutionises computer games. A fascinating sci-fi plot and complete player freedom are just some of the reasons why *Deus Ex* is such a landmark wonder.
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

SYSTEM SHOCK 2   PCZ #80 · 91%

Definitely one of the most compelling, original and disturbing games to hit the PC, *System Shock 2* manages to successfully mix the genres of role-playing, action and adventure into one. Play it in the house on your own with the lights off to prove how hard you are.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE REDEMPTION   PCZ #92 · 89%

This amazing RPG is a treat to play. An epic storyline, tactical combat and great acting and music more than make up for the fact that it's a linear hack 'n' slash game at heart.
PUBLISHER Activision • 0990 143525

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT   PCZ #87 · 87%

An incredible game from Black Isle, creators of *Baldur's Gate*. It's a dark, adult scorcher of an RPG. Moreover, the character development is the best we've seen in any game of its kind and the story is compelling, with well-scripted dialogue.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

BALDUR'S GATE II   PCZ #96 · 85%

The original *Baldur's Gate* was hailed as one of the best story-driven role-playing games ever. Although this sequel is not vastly different, it is bigger, better and extremely addictive. *Baldur's Gate II* is a must for all RPG fans.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

FINAL FANTASY VII   PCZ #66 · 80%

BUDGET GAME

Despite the recent release of *FFVIII*, we still rate this earlier episode in the series above it. The story is better, there are more subgames and the whole thing is more involving, especially if you like Japanese-style cartoony graphics. And it's now on budget release.
PUBLISHER Eidos Interactive • 020 8636 3000

FALLOUT 2   PCZ #71 · 79%

BUDGET GAME

Twice as big as the original, but utilising the exact same engine. If you liked the first game, you'll love this – and if you don't already own the original, you can now pick up both of these life-sapping RPGs for less than a tenner.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

ICEWIND DALE   PCZ #93 · 75%

Despite the introduction of larger enemies, *Icewind Dale* is little more than an add-on pack for *Baldur's Gate*. It looks the same and it plays the same, which isn't surprising since it's made by the same people. Very good, but no competition to *Baldur's Gate II*.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 0207 5514266

DIABLO II   PCZ #93 · 72%

Blizzard might have repackaged the original *Diablo* and produced an even bigger version with the same graphics and gameplay, but its fans aren't complaining. It's already one of the hottest and biggest-selling games ever.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 01189 209100

ODIUM   PCZ #87 · 70%

Imagine an RPG in the style of *Final Fantasy* with battle sequences a la *X-COM* and you'll have a pretty good idea of what *Odium* is like. The story is set in a European city populated by UN soldiers and a variety of monsters. In short, it's curiously compelling and it will keep you hooked.
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

ACTION/ADVENTURE

GRIM FANDANGO

PCZ #71 · 88%

If you've followed the successes of LucasArts from the early days of *Monkey Island*, *Sam & Max* and *Day Of The Tentacle*, this is a must-buy. Sublime graphics and genuine humour ensure it's a classic of its genre. A word of warning: it's bloody hard and, if your mind doesn't work laterally, you'll be playing it until the day you die.
PUBLISHER LucasArts • 020 7368 2255

DISCWORLD NOIR   PCZ #79 · 87%

BUDGET GAME

Although the point-and-click adventure genre is dying, *Discworld Noir* is still very much alive. It's darker in style than previous *Discworld* games and is all the better for it in our opinion, particularly if you're not a fan of Terry Pratchett's zany, off-the-wall humour. Don't miss it.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

SEVERANCE: BLADE OF DARKNESS   PCZ #98 · 87%

Anyone who doesn't mind being splattered with the kind of gore rarely seen outside of *Soldier Of Fortune* will find much to like in *Severance*. But it stands out from the usual hack 'n' slasher with its amazing engine and console-style combos.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

THE NOMAD SOUL   PCZ #83 · 86%

Distinctly odd, but original nonetheless, *The Nomad Soul* is a huge, intricate world populated by lap-dancers and David Bowie. At turns adventure, beat 'em up and platformer, it's insanely ambitious and almost manages to pull it off.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

HITMAN: CODENAME 47   PCZ #98 · 85%

Bringing back memories of *Leon* and *Day Of The Jackal*, *Hitman* recreates the cool excitement of carrying out a contract. Snipe from rooftops, disguise yourself in your victims' uniforms and walk away from explosions with calm elegance.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

BLAIR WITCH VOL 1: RUSTIN PARR   PCZ #96 · 84%

As well as being a truly scary action/horror title, this is one of the finest action/adventure games we've played. The suspense is incredible, and a constant stream of jump-out-of-your-seat moments will leave you with a distinct lack of clean underwear.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

INDIANA JONES AND THE INFERNAL MACHINE   PCZ #84 · 83%

LucasArts moves away from the point-and-click genre and into *Tomb Raider* territory for its latest Indy game, with the adventure elements still in place. Not bad, but not for traditionalists.
PUBLISHER Activision • 01895 456700

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND   PCZ #98 · 82%

One of the hardest skills to master when developing a game is the ability to make your audience genuinely laugh with you rather than at you, and undoubtedly *Escape From Monkey Island* is one of the most genuinely funny games to come out for the last couple of years.
PUBLISHER Activision • 0990 143525

DEEP SPACE NINE: THE FALLEN   PCZ #98 · 82%

It's not often that a game with little promise on paper surprises us so nicely. *DS9* is a third-person action/adventure that offers you the chance to control Sisko, Kira or Worf. Gameplay is different for each character, which provides longevity in spades.
PUBLISHER Infinite Loop/Koch • 01256 707767

METAL GEAR SOLID   PCZ #96 · 82%

Although it's been ported pretty much identically from the console version (with a few graphical improvements), *MGS*'s tense gameplay, well-designed levels and variety of challenging bosses makes it stand out from the majority of similar PC titles.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

RACING GAMES

COLIN MCRAE RALLY 2.0

PCZ #98 · 86%

PCZONE BENCHMARK GAME

With all the rally games available it was always going to be interesting to see how 2.0 would fare. Unsurprisingly, it blows away the competition. The graphics are superb, the detail all-encompassing and the car handles beautifully. If you have been waiting patiently for the definitive rally game, this is definitely it.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2 — PCZ #96 · 84%

Buckle up for some high-speed action, as you race around London and San Francisco in this sequel. You won't find a more entertaining arcade driving game. The original *MM* was a belter, but with more cars and races and improved controls, *MM2* is now the daddy.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

F1 CHAMPIONSHIP: SEASON 2000 — PCZ #97 · 82%

While lacking the detailed realism of *GP3*, EA's latest F1 offering provides more fun and adrenalin pumping moments than any other PC F1 game. With its mixture of arcade action and realism it is both accurate and easy to pick up.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

LE MANS 24 HOURS — PCZ #87 · 81 %
BUDGET GAME

Although not quite as challenging as the race it's based on, *Le Mans 24 Hours* is a driving game for skillful players who know their brakes from their elbows. You can even get involved in a rewarding career mode, culminating in the famous race itself.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

GRAND PRIX 3 — PCZ #94 · 80%

This F1 title displays all the customary Crammond perfectionism. The detail is amazing, which makes it all the more puzzling as to why there is no team work. Don't expect much more than a 3D accelerated *GP2*, but if that's what you're after you'll love it.
PUBLISHER Infogrames•0161 8278060

INSANE — PCZ #97 · 78%

Primarily an online racing game, *Insane* allows you and your friends to indulge in some off-road racing mayhem in a range of different vehicles. Its wide selection of races will have you in hysterics, but the novelty does wear off pretty quickly.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

NEED FOR SPEED PORSCHE 2000 — PCZ #90 · 78%

Not as good as hooking up with your mates at the arcade, but still a damn good conversion of a damn fine game. Forget realism and concentrate on flinging your car around the track as fast as you can. Who needs depth when racing is this exciting?
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

RALLY MASTERS — PCZ #89 · 77%

Rally games tend to blend into one another quite seamlessly. After all, the cars look exactly the same and they go round the same tracks. *Rally Masters*, however, offers the all important feel of a great driving game together with loads of options and some tasty graphics.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

TOCA 2 — PCZ #76 · 76%
BUDGET GAME

Predictably, Codemasters has gone and done it again. More cars, more tracks and the same stunning attention to detail make *TOCA 2* an essential purchase for petrolheads. Graphically, it may not be a massive improvement, but gameplay-wise it definitely is.
PUBLISHER Codemasters • 01926 814132

RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP — PCZ #84 · 75%
BUDGET GAME

Close, but no *McRae*. That was the verdict from the boy Hill on this new racer. It looks fantastic and the on-screen Ordnance Survey map is a nice touch, but it is let down by some poor camera angles and unnecessarily solid obstacles. Ouch.
PUBLISHER Actualise • 01625 855015

FLIGHT SIMS

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

PCZ #99 · 89%

PCZONE BENCHMARK GAME

Allow yourself to be immersed in one of the most exciting and realistic combat flight sims around. The action is non-stop, and even though the graphics and general gameplay may not be ground breaking, *Battle Of Britain* is one of the best examples of a game that transports you right into the cockpit. Tally ho!
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337

FALCON 4 — PCZ #72 · 88%

We waited patiently for years for this title to arrive, and the good news is that, for once, we weren't disappointed. *Falcon 4* features incredible 3D-accelerated graphics and a dynamic campaign structure that leaves the competition standing still.
PUBLISHER Infogrames •0161 8278060

B-17 FLYING FORTRESS: THE MIGHTY 8TH — PCZ #96 · 87%

B17 reproduces the experience of piloting a WWII bomber. Everything's covered, from planning missions to dropping bombs. A must for WWII and realism freaks.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2 — PCZ #97 · 87%

If WWII dog-fighting is your thing, then this is the game you have been waiting for. Its excellent user interface, engrossing campaigns, intense combat and superb graphics all come together to create a true sense of excitement and realism.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON — PCZ #103 · 85%

NEW ENTRY Finally a flight sim that values the 'flight' aspect over the 'sim' so you can just enjoy the gameplay. *Tycoon* marks the future of the genre where the campaign engine takes care of itself while you play at being Tom Cruise.
PUBLISHER Rage Software • 0151 237 2200

F-22 TOTAL AIR WAR — PCZ #68 · 85%
BUDGET GAME

This updated version of DID's masterpiece may seem a bit superflous for anyone who already owns *F-22 ADF*, but those of you who are looking to buy one of the greatest combat sims of recent years should seriously consider this title, now available on budget.
PUBLISHER Ocean/DID • 0161 832 6633

F/A-18E SUPER HORNET — PCZ #83 · 84%

If you like your flight sims to be realistic with a great big capital 'R', look no further. In fact, this game is so life-like that the US navy has adopted it for promotional work and ground-based familiarity training. But make sure to watch out for friendly fire.
PUBLISHER Titus Software • 01926 335 5400

MIG ALLEY — PCZ #80 · 84%

MiG Alley gives hardcore flight simmers a run for their money, but don't let that put you off. If you're willing to put in the work, this title will repay you with a wealth of excellent in-flight graphics and a selection of brilliant mission-planning elements.
PUBLISHER Empire Interactive • 020 8343 7337

FLIGHT UNLIMITED III — PCZ #82 · 83%

For all those sim aficionados who enjoy the experience of flying for its own sake rather than as a lame excuse for blasting other flying things to bits, this (along with the *Flight Sim* series) is an object of worship and devotion. It certainly deserves high praise.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

CRIMSON SKIES — PCZ #96 · 82%

This game moves away from the detailed simulation mould of so many plane games, and concentrates more on all-out dogfighting. It's instantly gratifying, fast paced, entertaining and adds a much needed twist of humour to an otherwise serious genre.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

⬅ SPORTS

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 2

PCZ #98 · 88%

🔅 *Pro Skater 2* is an unbelievable experience. The sense of speed and balance is uncanny, and there is almost as much satisfaction to be had from pulling off an acrobatic new move as there is from watching your skater break every bone as he smashes his face against the concrete. Oh, and the music's fantastic too.
PUBLISHER Activision • 0990 143525

VIRTUAL POOL 3

PCZ #99 · 85%

🔅 *VP3* has the perfect physics and graphics of its predecessors plus some cool new features, including multiplayer options, career mode and training videos by pool diva Jeanette Lee. It's the best pool sim you can buy, and it's almost as good as the real thing.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

FIFA 2001

PCZ #97 · 83%

🔅 Once again the FIFA franchise gets its yearly makeover. There are only minor improvements over the last version, but it's still the best football game for the PC. The player animations and presentation are spot on, but we can't help feeling there's a better football game to come.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

SUPREME SNOWBOARDING

PCZ #85 · 83%

🔅 Snowboarding is not a sport you'd expect to captivate a PC audience, but this game gives as exhilarating an experience as you could hope for without the risk of breaking a leg. Oh, and all the streetwise attitude you'd expect is there too, of course.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 8278060

PGA CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF 2000

PCZ #92 · 82%

🔅 It's really not much different from last year's title, but this edition has enough subtle tweaks to make it a worthwhile purchase. It also has the best control system we've seen in what is definitely the best golf game available.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100

NBA LIVE 2000

PCZ #85 · 82%

🔅 As slick as always, but what makes this special is the inclusion of teams from the '50s onwards, comedy haircuts and all. It's not quite as immediate as *Inside Drive*, but is a more complete simulation of the sport all round.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

OPEN TENNIS 2000

PCZ #92· 81%

🔅 Not since *Super Tennis* on the SNES have we had so much fun hitting a ball back and forth over a net. After some initial reluctance, the whole office stopped fragging and started lobbing. Incredibly playable and unsurpassed in multiplayer.
PUBLISHER Cryo • 0121 250 5070

JIMMY WHITE'S CUEBALL 2

PCZ #68 · 78%

BUDGET GAME

🔅 The finest snooker simulation on the PC. Chalk your cue and take on the PC or your mates and, when you're tired of the baize, you can move round and have a go on the fully featured darts board instead. Saves going down to the Working Men's Club.
PUBLISHER Virgin/Interplay • 020 7551 4266

ACTUA SOCCER 3

PCZ #72· 72%

🔅 If you can't get on with *FIFA* then *Actua* is the second port of call for footy fans. It plays a faster game and there's a good range of options and a huge number of teams to play against, which goes a long way to helping maintain its shelf life.
PUBLISHER Gremlin Interactive • 0114 273 8601

MILLENNIUM GAMES

PCZ #93 · 65%

🔅 Everyone remembers the good old days of Daley Thompson's joystick-waggling *Decathlon*. Sergei Bubka might not have quite the same pedigree, but this athletics simulation is loads of fun nonetheless and should keep you entertained for a while.
PUBLISHER Midas • 01782 633500

MANAGEMENT

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: 00/01

PCZ #96 · 93%

🔅 This update for the greatest management game ever sees the series improve yet again. New features include increased media involvement, greater backroom staff participation, a live league table and more player information. All this adds to the game's addictiveness, which will once again drain you of your free time and take over your life.
PUBLISHER Eidos • 020 8636 3000

THE SIMS

PCZ #87 · 85%
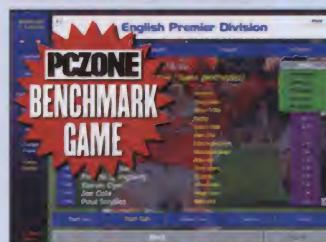
🔅 This offers a staggering amount of possibilities. Essentially, you create your own person, or family, and guide them through the ups and downs of life. It's the definitive docu-soap and makes for compelling gameplay.
PUBLISHER Electronic Arts • 01753 549442

CAESAR III

PCZ #70 · 84%

🔅 Starting from scratch, you've got to build a majestic Roman city and ensure a harmonious life for your citizens. So what? So it's utterly absorbing and probably the most addictive god sim in existence.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100

SIMCITY 3000

PCZ #74 · 83%

🔅 Ten years on, *SimCity* remains as addictive as it ever was. Little was broken, and little was fixed. With new buildings and an enhanced transport system, *SimCity 3000* is a must for old-timers and new addicts alike.
PUBLISHER Maxis/EA • 01753 549442

ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON

PCZ #75 · 82%

🔅 Pack out your own theme park with the most fiendish rides your imagination can conjure up. From rickety wooden dippers to Nemesis-style, white-knuckle gurners, *RollerCoaster Tycoon* is hugely addictive.
PUBLISHER Infogrames • 0161 827 8060

SPACE COMBAT

X - BEYOND THE FRONTIER

PCZ #82 · 87%

🔅 The spirit of *Elite* lives on in this massive trading epic from Germany, in which you must buy and fight your way back home to Earth. The combat side of the gameplay may not be the best on offer, but with goods to trade and races to discover, it rewards patience with variety and months of play. This title is deeply hypnotic and beautiful, rather than tense and frenetic.
PUBLISHER THQ • 01483 767656

TERMINUS

PCZ #93 · 86%

🔅 Who says the days of independent bedroom programming are over? *Terminus* proves you can make a great game on your own if you have the talent and the passion. It just edges out *FreeSpace 2*.
PUBLISHER Vicarious Visions • www.vvisions.com

FREESPACE 2

PCZ #84 · 85%

🔅 Completely different from *X*, *FreeSpace 2* offers fast-paced dogfighting action all the way. It boasts a superb interface, epic story and amazing graphics, but it's a bit short-lived if you don't play online.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

X-WING: ALLIANCE

PCZ #77 · 81%

🔅 At last! Fly the Millennium Falcon in the final episode of the long-running *X-Wing* series. Certainly the best-looking *X-Wing* game to date, *Alliance* is slow at first, but boy does it pick up later on.
PUBLISHER Activision •0990 143525

STARLANCER

PCZ #91 · 80%

🔅 While *Starlancer* doesn't do anything startlingly new, it is a highly polished affair with compulsive gameplay and gorgeous visuals. A must for space sim fans.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

3D ACTION/STRATEGY

HIDDEN & DANGEROUS
PCZ #79 · 90%

✪ You don't get a second chance in a real war, and *Hidden & Dangerous* is the game that comes closest to putting you in the middle of hell on earth. It grabs you by the balls from the first mission and doesn't let up until you're dead, with a bullet in the head. As a strategic shoot 'em up, games don't get any harder, or more compelling and atmospheric.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

HOSTILE WATERS
PCZ #101 · 87%
✪ A brilliant RTS/action game that you can play purely strategically. However, you can also leap into a unit and get involved in the action. It's just a shame there aren't any multiplayer options though.
PUBLISHER Rage • 01512 372200

GIANTS: CITIZEN KABUTO
PCZ #95 · 85%
✪ This mammoth and origianl 3D action/strategy game includes third-person shooter, RTS, RPG and real-time combat elements. It also features a superbly balanced multiplayer option.
PUBLISHER Interplay • 020 7551 4266

SWAT 3: ELITE EDITION
PCZ #97 · 84%
✪ AI doesn't come much better. The spectacular graphics and command system come alive here. Although not as fun as *Counter-Strike*, it's more realistic, and features five new maps and countless weapon configurations.
PUBLISHER Vivendi • 0118 920 9100

ROGUE SPEAR
PCZ #84 · 83%
✪ We loved *Rainbow Six* and, although this follow-up can't match *Hidden & Dangerous* for intensity, it's a superb romp through the world of terrorism. Pick your team, kit them out and plan your missions carefully.
PUBLISHER Take 2 Interactive • 01753 722900

ONLINE ONLY

COUNTER-STRIKE
PCZ #98 · 93%

✪ The most widely tested game ever finally comes out of its Beta stage. Most people had reservations about the new models, but you soon get used to their camp animations and begin to appreciate how much more detailed they are. You can expect to see the game improving, as the V1.1 tag suggests there will be plenty of updates in the future.
DOWNLOAD www.counter-strike.net

EVERQUEST: THE RUINS OF KUNARK
PCZ #92 · 90%
✪ The combat-oriented online RPG of choice just got a whole lot better. Chris Anderson has spent months casting spells with hundreds of others and never stops talking about it, so there must be something special going on.
PUBLISHER Ubi Soft • 020 8944 9000

TRIBES 2
PCZ#103 · 87%
NEWENTRY The best multiplayer team-based shooter in existance. *Tribes 2* is well worth persevering with. Superb graphics and a new 3D engine propel it to the frontline of PC gaming.
PUBLISHER Vivendi• 01189 209100

ALLEGIANCE
PCZ #91 · 82%
✪ The first true online-only space combat sim, *Allegiance* is a complex yet rewarding beast. Now you can fly around with hundreds of others, co-ordinating strategies and establishing chains of command.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

ASHERON'S CALL
PCZ #88 · 76%
✪ The graphics and freedom to do almost anything make this title a commendable addition to the genre. But, as in life, it's seems a tragedy you can't kill other humans as most of the ones you meet deserve a good kicking.
PUBLISHER Microsoft • 0845 7002000

PCZONE ALL-TIME CLASSICS

DOOM
✪ This is the game that needs no introduction. Without *Doom* we wouldn't have had *Quake*, *Unreal Tournament* or *Half-Life*. Every time you play a first-person shooter you should take five minutes to pay homage to the game that changed the world as we know it. *Doom*, we thank you.

ULTIMA VII
✪ Still the best of all the *Ultima* games, and probably the finest RPG ever seen on a PC. The graphics might be old-hat, but the gameplay certainly isn't. *Ultima VII* blends exploration and character interaction, and it's the last title in the *Ultima* series to give complete party control.

ULTIMA UNDERWORLD
✪ We reviewed this game back in the first issue of *PC ZONE*. It was a landmark RPG then and it's still a landmark RPG now, although the graphics obviously look a bit tired and dated. Do we think it's the best RPG ever? Almost, but not quite. Cast your eyes up the mag a couple of inches for the answer to that question.

DUNE II
✪ If you know your strategy, you'll know that *Dune II* is the game that's done more than any of its rivals to define the genre as we know it today. The 2000 update was disappointing, but only because it didn't add anything new. The fact that it still plays better than many new titles is testament to its staying power.

SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER
✪ EA's *FIFA* series might look the part, but we're convinced that *Sensible Soccer* was and is the ultimate example of gameplay over presentation. With its famous top-down view, *Sensible* offers fast frantic action that does more to replicate the real-life game than any of its predecessors.

UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN
✪ This game came out of nowhere and took the world by storm. Compelling strategy, tense turn-based battles and a myriad of research options made this the most addictive game ever upon its arrival. Subsequent sequels were just as addictive, but this is the game that originally captured our hearts.

MAGIC CARPET
✪ Drawing gasps of amazement from everyone who saw it, Bullfrog's *Magic Carpet* was one of the most original and inventive games to be released in the early days of 3D. So original, in fact, that it never got the recognition it deserved. We still think the blend of action and strategy was spot-on.

WING COMMANDER
✪ The original space combat game spawned the first big-budget PC series. In fact, the Wing Commander series was so hugely successful that they went and made a film. Inevitably, this was absolute rubbish and the public stayed away in their millions. Will these people never learn?

TOMB RAIDER
✪ She might be getting a bit rusty round the gills, but when Lara first bounced onto the small screen, we fell in love with her instantly. 3D action adventure games haven't been the same since and at the time nothing could touch her. Do you remember your first encounter with the *T-Rex*?

CIVILISATION
✪ The original and some say the best turn-based strategy game. When *Civilization* first appeared, it was hailed correctly as the first game that changed and evolved depending on how you played it. Recent versions have presented more of the same, but in this case that is definitely no bad thing.

RETRO ZONE

The arrival of the 16-bit powerhouses

⭑ **LATE-'80S STUDENT** Keith Pullin

HEADLINES

British Government reviews airport security after two journalists reach baggage area posing as cleaners • American colleges accused of recruiting students for their football skills rather than their academic skills • Israel stops talking to Palestine • Al Fayed brothers close to buying Harrods • New Formula One season begins but turbo engines are banned • Canada's top woman sprinter, Angella Issajenko, claims she took steroids and injected Ben Johnson with the same drug

POPULOUS

The dawn of creation

Peter Molyneux's *Populous* changed the face of home computing forever. In an era that had never seen anything quite like it, gamers and reviewers alike were divided on what category this seminal game should fall into. In retrospect, it was probably the first ever RTS. Ultimately though, *Populous* is remembered as the father of all God simulations.

The idea of shaping the 3D land, building homes and moulding the destiny of hundreds of little people is, of course, a concept that Molyneux is still running with. Even now it's amazing how similar *Black & White* and *Populous* are. So, if you're playing *B&W* at this very moment and feel the urge to understand where it all came from, *Populous* is a vintage journey you should definitely undertake.

Believe it or not, we were all well impressed...

Populous also had some great add-on packs that changed the world.

What a scary title screen.

THE BEST OF THE REST

BATTLECHESS
(PC)

Most famous for its amazing animation and imaginative battles between the pieces, few people remember the brilliance of the computer opponent. With ten skill levels, you'd be lucky to make an impression on the second of these – *Battlechess* would whip your ass in a matter of seconds.

OPERATION WOLF
(PC)

In the arcades this was the first game to feature actual guns that you could pick up and fire at the screen. Obviously such luxuries were not available on the Atari ST and PC, but it never stopped the game bulldozing its way to the top of the charts. Some might say undeservedly so, and we'd agree.

S.T.U.N. RUNNER
(Arcade)

S.T.U.N. Runner was actually designed by the same team that created the original *Star Wars* arcade game. Unfortunately, despite its utter brilliance, this polygon racer never went on to be anywhere near as successful. Indeed, it was only ever ported to one console, the Atari Lynx.

VINDICATORS
(Spectrum)

One of the last games to be released for the Spectrum – and what a game it was. The idea was to run around some corridors and kill some aliens. And that's it. It sounds simple, but with great animation and totally fluid gameplay it was a kick in the teeth for the bigger boys.

DUNGEON MASTER
(Atari ST/Amiga/PC)

While it wasn't quite the RPG that started it all off, *Dungeon Master* was the first to incorporate real-time combat into a tile-based 3D environment. The *Baldur's Gate* of its day, it's unfortunate that the 1994 sequel turned out to be such a disappointment.

<< PAST FORWARD >>

GAMING NEWS FOR MARCH '89

Arcade conversions were all the rage.

The first immaculately presented sports title.

✪ If arcade conversions were your thing, the late '80s were a good time to own a computer. In March 1989, the computer game charts included the illustrious likes of *Space Harrier*, *Bomb Jack*, *Operation Wolf* and *Thunderblade*.

✪ Thankfully, there was just enough space left on the shop shelves for originality too, most of which came courtesy of Cinemaware, one of the most innovative developers of the time. *TV Sports Football* is a perfect example of the standards they set, its television-style commentary and presentation undoubtedly inspired the modern crop of sports titles from developers such as EA Sports and Sierra Sports.

✪ Amazingly, this was also a time when you could pick up quality games for just £1.99. *Joe Blade 2* for the ailing

Spectrum was a fine example of this phenomenon. It made sense though: why shell out £30 for a 16-bit game when you could spend £2 on some perfectly decent entertainment? It was a marketing ploy that worked well and was probably responsible for prolonging the old Speccy's life for another year at least.

✪ This was also a notable period for flight simulations. At long last they actually started to look and feel vaguely realistic. Flying the flag in this genre was the highly impressive *Falcon*. We still remember the joy of our first blackout after a particularly tight high G-force turn. The *Falcon* series is still alive today, of course, and its innovations can justly claim to have played a significant part in the evolution of the genre.

"I am the law."
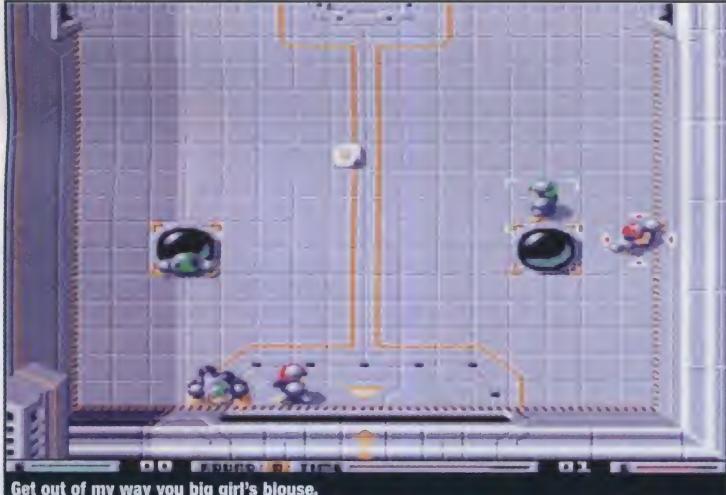
Get out of my way you big girl's blouse.

SPEEDBALL

A bitmap of the future

Speedball was probably one of the best games the Bitmap Brothers ever made – and they made some damn fine games. This ultra-violent glimpse into the 22nd century stood as a homage to the film *Rollerball* and also reflected on the then dismal state of pre-Premier League English football.

But *Speedball* wasn't developed as an indictment of modern society, it was a game to be enjoyed – and enjoy it we most

certainly did. In terms of all-out escapism, there were (and still are) few gaming experiences to match it. The sound effects made you wince with pain, the animation for the players was clear and quick, and there was a raw edge to the gameplay that was only superseded with the release of *Speedball 2* a couple of years later.

If you were after pure adrenaline-pumping emotional entertainment, there was no better fix than *Speedball*.

COMMODORE OR ATARI? THAT WAS THE QUESTION...

Consoles were virtually non-existent in 1989. Nintendo didn't even have headquarters in the UK and Sony was nowhere to be seen. The only valid candidate was Sega's Master System, but even then the mighty Sega could offer nothing more than an 8-bit machine with a software portfolio consisting of sub-standard arcade conversions. It wouldn't be until later in the year that both the Atari Lynx and the Sega Megadrive would make a welcome appearance.

The late '80s were really the era of the 16-bit home computer. You were either in the Atari ST camp or the Commodore Amiga camp. The latter machine was generally regarded as the better choice when it came to graphics, sound and multitasking capabilities, but Atari of course had the bigger name and the cash backing. But slowly things changed, and soon the Amiga's technical superiority shone through to make Commodore's 16-bit powerhouse the most popular home computer since the ZX Spectrum.

Sadly, gaming piracy also became rampant around this time and with the epidemic in full force many smaller game developers folded. It was the end of the age of innocence and the dawn of a new corporate multi-billion pound industry.

⊙ This was considered cutting edge when it was released. Huh!

ON THE CD

This month our cover discs are jam-packed full of *PC ZONE* goodness, so sink your teeth into this lot

⚫ **WORDS** Rhianna Pratchett **DISCS** Cecil Ashitey and Lee Cocker

DEMOS

EDGE OF CHAOS: INDEPENDENCE WAR 2

Infogrames · Disc 1

EXCLUSIVE

We bring you the exclusive playable demo of the game that has kept the *PCZ* team knee deep in dribble for the past few weeks. Train to fly your ship, play a couple of missions and explore this immense freeform universe. With the most stunning visuals we've ever seen in a space combat game and a superb storyline, you're simply being spoilt rotten with this one.

CONTROLS

Forward thrust override	W
Reverse thrust override	S
Left lateral thrust	A
Right lateral thrust	D
Disengage flight assist (hold to spin)	Left Ctrl
Toggle flight assist	N
Toggle LDS drive	L
Undock	U
Activate remote link to target	Shift + R
Disengage autopilot	F5
Approach Autopilot	F6
Dock Autopilot	F8
Fire current weapon	Space
Cycle to next gun	Enter
Cycle to next missile	Backspace
Tag cargo pod for pickup	U
Target next enemy	E
Target nearest enemy	R
Target most recent attacker	Q

Oh no, it's the rozzers.

The FMV sequences are truly stunning.

Death to the pointy eared people.

Doh, no water.

ARCANUM:
OF STEAMWORKS AND MAGICK OBSCURA
Sierra Studios · Disc 2

Some days you just can't go out without people accusing you of being the reincarnation of some religious zealot. Well, it happens all the time in *Arcanum* where magic and technology exist in an uneasy balance, and that's just the start of it. Create your own character or play with a pre-made one and explore a few levels in this *Baldur's Gate/Diablo II*-style RPG. Don't worry, for those of you who like to dress up, female characters will be available in the full version.

CONTROLS Mouse

ASSIMILATION
Small Rockets · Disc 1

One of those minute to learn, lifetime to master and five hours before you start wondering where the time has gone type games, that looks like loads of others you have played. Change your opponents pieces into yours by jumping or cloning and start remembering an age when games were simple and no one tried to blow all your limbs off before your body hit the ground.

CONTROLS Mouse

It's that simple.

OFFROAD
Rage · Disc 2

Stick your sunglasses on and watch out for the obligatory lens flare in the latest batch of off-road shenanigans, this time from Scouse-codemasters, Rage Software. You get a complete lap in the shade of the forest to take on and hopefully beat three computer-controlled cars, before deciding whether you like it enough to buy the full release.

Come on, you can do better.

Look at the lens flare on that...

CONTROLS

Left	Left
Right	Right
Up	Accelerate
Down	Brake
Spacebar	Handbrake
Q	Rear view
Backspace	Change camera
A	Gear up
Z	Gear down
N	Nitro

It's a nice day for a war.

Discredit their public image or jump on their heads – the choice is yours.
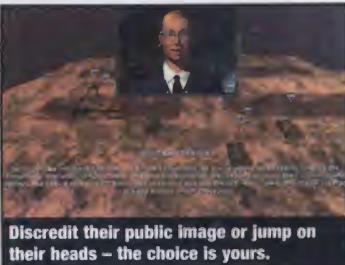
CONFLICT ZONE
Ubi Soft · Disc 1

Finding yourself bored by all the resource gathering and churning out of tanks found in your average RTS? Then this could be the game for you. Defeat your enemy and discredit them through the media, like all good commanders do. This demo gives you three missions to start you on your trail of destruction.

CONTROLS Mouse

LEGENDS OF MIGHT & MAGIC
3do · Disc 2

Dubbed by Shoemaker as "*Counter-Strike*- in tights" this *Legends Of Might & Magic* first-look demo gives you team vs team medieval mayhem for up to 16 players, with six unique characters over two detailed levels. Be good, be evil, but be quick because unfortunately this demo is only available until June 16.

CONTROLS

Strafe Left/Right	A/D
Move Forward/Backwards	W/S
Use item	E
Jump	Space
Crouch	Left-[Ctrl]
Buy item	B
Drop current weapon	G
Talk	T
Team Talk	Y
Team Commands	Z
Current Player Statistics Screen	[Tab]
Arms Current Bought Weapon	1
Arms Default Ranged	2
Arms Melee Weapon	3
Single Use Items	4

A bit of medieval mayhem anyone?

THE SETTLERS IV

Blue Byte · Disc 1

Graduates of the gingerbread building school.

All done and dusted! Now watch as one of your settlers grabs an axe and moves into the building. You can tell from the red flag on top of the hut that an industrious little Woodcutter has taken up residence. Click here to move on.

Deers and bunnies, I couldn't possibly kill them, that would be evil.

Cute things building other cute things, cutely. That's pretty much all you need to know about the *Settlers* series. Get to grips with the basics of *Settlers IV* in two tutorials and a kick the little Vikings scenario mission, that are so damn addictive and... yes cute... that you'll probably have to go and mug a pensioner just to feel normal again.

CONTROLS Mouse

CREATURES DOCKING STATION

Creature Labs · Disc 1

Breed things... then kill them.
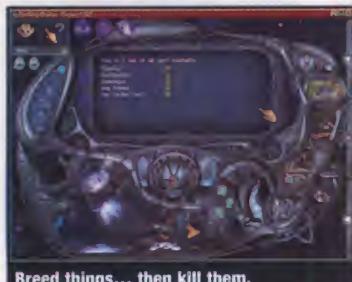
This fully self-contained world allows you all the fun and frolics of creature breeding online. Create your own unique family of Norns, swap creatures with your friends in real-time and bread the best Norn. Requires an Internet connection.

CONTROLS Mouse/Keyboard

STRONGHOLD CASTLE ATTACKS

Take 2 · Disc 1

A mini game from Firefly Studios maker of the castle building sim *Stronghold*. Manage your forces, stop the enemy breaking your barricades while building up your castle. Simple, fun stuff, plus you get to drop boiling oil on people, which is satisfying.

Not much like the actual game, but what the hell.

CONTROLS

Aim up/down	Left/right arrows
Add/remove archers	Up/down arrows
Fire arrows	Space
Drop burning oil	Enter
Pause	P

Why heellooo... who's that foxy looking chick... oh, sorry Dave.

DIGIMASK LAUNCH PAD

CD1

Make a 3D digital image of your own head and if that isn't scary enough for you, you can use the Viewer application to check out some of the totally horrifying masks of some of the *PCZ* team. Requires an Internet connection to register and Visual Basic 6.0 runtime SP3 or better, which is available from www.microsoft.com

PATCHES
CD1

Age Of Sail V1.50	Kingdom Under Fire v1.09
Balls Of Steel v1.3	Kohan v107.
Diablo II v1.06	Links 2001 v1.2
Fallout Tactics 1.25 Patch	Majesty: The Northern Expansion
Fallout Tactics Sprites Patch	Update 1
Fate Of The Dragon SP1	Mech Warrior 4 v1.0
Gore Demo Patch v1.27	Rune 1.06
Hostile Waters v1.03	Sea Dogs 1.06
Icewind Dale: Heart Of Winter v 1.41	Starfleet Command Vol II Bonus
IHRA Drag Racing v1.02	Mission
Kingdom Under Fire v1.08	Summoner Demo Patch v101
from any version	Summoner Retail Patch v1.21

PATCHES DATABASE

Due to an oversight in testing, some readers with HP printers may experience problems while attempting to use the patches database. If you get an error message when trying to launch this file, explore the CD through Windows Explorer, open the 'Patches' folder and copy the 'PC ZONE' folder onto your desktop. When you open this folder from your PC, and click on the 'patches.exe' file, the database should work.

MODWATCH
CD2

Quake III Fortress Beta 1h Update	D-Day: Normandy Beta 3
Conundrum 2	ARG! One
Fragball for Unreal Tournament	

HOTSHOTS PART 2
CD2

Operation Flashpoint: Cold War Crisis

EXTENDED PLAY
CD2

Turn to page 142 where Tony Lamb brings you the best in *Delta Force: Land Warrior* and *Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2* maps.

EXTENDED PLAY

This month it's strategy and tactics time with the armchair generals of the *PC ZONE* readership catered for by the great RTS *Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2*, and plenty of tactical blasting courtesy of *Delta Force: Land Warrior*

⊗ **KEEPING IT REAL** Tony Lamb

TRY IT YOURSELF

To install the *Red Alert 2* maps, unzip them into your main *Red Alert 2* directory. Once in the game, select 'Single Player', 'Skirmish', 'Customise Battle' and then choose the map you want from the menu.

For *Delta Force: Land Warrior*, unzip the maps into your main *DFLW* directory, then decide whether you want to play a single or multiplayer game. All that's left to do now is to select one of the seven new maps from the map menu.

COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 2

Real-time strategy doesn't get much better than this, and Westwood's eagerly awaited follow-up to the original *C&C* and *Tiberian Sun* has proved itself to be a real star in the RTS firmament. Few games have engendered such fanatical support and it doesn't take long to see why. Superb gameplay, an almost idiot-proof learning curve and the ever-present Westwood style have come together to make it a real winner.

GUNS OF NAVARONE

MAP OF THE MONTH GUNS OF NAVARONE

Filename: GunsofNavarone.zip
Size: 217Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪✪

This is a big map designed for two to eight players. It's not one to tackle on your own unless you're very, very good at the game (and lucky for that matter). The reason for this is the neutral Grand Cannon base that sits in the middle of the map – it's very heavily defended and packs some awesome firepower. In fact, the best way to take this base out is with a combined air, fleet and amphibious attack, which isn't easy for one player to do. Author EJAH says that players with lower spec machines might find that when playing this map, the game takes a while to start – so be warned. That said, this is a real challenge and very enjoyable.

Watch out for the long centre island in Guns Of Navarone – it's a hugely powerful Grand Cannon base.

⊗ AMSTERDAMNED (MAP)

Filename: Amsterdamned.zip
Size: 137Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪

⊕ A big airforce is ideal for *Amsterdamned* as the cluttered, canal-riven cityscape makes ground war difficult.

Amsterdam is a beautiful European city with some lovely architecture, a lot of history and plenty of canals to make getting around difficult. This map by EJAH works along similar lines: it looks good but it's as cramped and difficult to negotiate as its namesake. You'll find plenty of ore near your starting position, but you'll still need to explore or you'll be stuck when it runs out – and it will, soon enough. Watch out for some unfriendly locals and enjoy the red light district and coffee houses.

⊗ DEEZIRE (UTILITY)

Filename: ra2deez.zip
Size: 2.7Mb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪✪

⊕ Take out defences from the air then move in to take control.

DeeZire is more than just a mod for *Red Alert 2* – it's more of a tweaking package. It doesn't add anything new to the game in the way of maps, units or missions, but instead allows the user to access a host of *RA2* features that usually stay hidden. There's nowhere near enough space to describe it all here (check out the

DeeZire website for full details) but you can expect to see unlocked maps, units, sounds, animations, game modes and more – all of which are hidden or unused in the proper game release. It's clever stuff, and with version 6 just around the corner it looks set to get even better.

To install *DeeZire*, extract the 'Install.exe' file to your hard disk and then run it. You do need to make sure it installs into your *Red Alert* directory!

⊗ EAGLE RED V1.0 (MOD)

Filename: EagleRed10.zip
Size: 739Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪

⊕ *Eagle Red*: making skirmish games more fun.

Author Maarten says that the objective of the *Eagle Red* mod is "to make skirmish games more fun" and who are we to argue with that idea? The mod is extensive in operation, with the Allies getting six new units including Stealth Bombers and Chrono Medics. The Soviets also get six, which include a powerful Missile Submarine and Giant Ants (yes, really – they're cheap and useful in large numbers). *Eagle Red* also modifies eight Allied and six Soviet units, adds five new Allied buildings and four for the Soviets, adds three new game modes and allows more variety in starting credits and unit numbers. No wonder this mod is proving so popular among the multiplayer *RA2* fans, and version 1.1 will soon be with us too.

To install *Eagle Red 1.0* just unzip it to your *RA2* directory and away you go.

AMSTERDAMNED

Fortify the buildings around your base in Amsterdamned.

⊗ COVERT STRIKE (MOD)

Filename: covert_strike.zip
Size: 962kb
Rating: ✪✪✪

This is Beta 1 of the *Covert Strike* mod from author Agaiz and essentially all it does is add a bunch of new units to the Allied and Soviet listings. The Allies get a new Light Tank and Chrono Tank while the Soviets are blessed with a Howitzer, Hind helicopter and a Spyplane.

To install *Covert Strike*, just extract the .zip file to your *Red Alert 2* directory and then run the 'Covert Strike.exe' file.

⊗ HAMBURGER HILLS (MAP)

Filename: Hamburgerhills.zip
Size: 211Kb
Rating: ✪✪✪✪

⊕ There's little between you and your enemy in Hamburger Hills, so expect a lot of attacks.

Remember the Clint Eastwood film of the same name? Well, this isn't Vietnam but the way your troops can get chewed up by the fighting is pretty much the same. This is a four-player map by EJAH with two players starting on the hills on the eastern side of the map while the other two start (rather predictably) on the western side. There is one road

HAMBURGER HILLS

Welcome to the Midwest boys – yee haw! Watch out for unfriendly, in-bred locals...

between the east and the west where most of the fighting is likely to take place, and a couple of broken bridges that can be repaired – if you have time. One for the players who like their battles head-on.

EAGLE'S NEST (MAP)
Filename: Eaglesnest11.zip
Size: 181Kb
Rating: ●●●●

⊕ Eagle's Nest is a nightmare for ground attack. There are rivers and canyons everywhere which make for slow overland progress.

Author EJAH has cut some corners for you in this map by sitting your base inside a castle which has been built on top of a mountain – instant defences. Inside your base you'll find an

> **"Watch out for some unfriendly locals in _Amsterdamned_, and enjoy the red light district and coffee houses"**

airport already there, plus two oil derricks which save you from having to build/capture them early on in the game. Outside your base there are a further four airports to capture, but these are all well defended and should only be tackled once you're sure your forces are stronger. Gems are in plentiful supply in your base and you can fortify your surroundings

very well if you come under attack and a siege develops (although to be honest, you're probably only delaying the inevitable by this point).

BRIDGE WAR (MAP)
Filename: BridgeWar.zip
Size: 137Kb
Rating: ●●●

⊕ Four islands but enough bridges to make ground war an option – watch out!

Bridge War is a four-player map from author Z_Outlaw and is one for all you engineering fans out there. All of the combatants start close to a cliff which cuts them off from the rest of the map. Luckily for them, each has a couple of bridges but these are of course

vulnerable to attack – so defend them well and remember your engineers are there to effect repairs. There are plenty of tech oil derricks and airports dotted about and also a number of nuclear plants to be grabbed (although these can be well defended). Watch out for sneaky attacks – there are quite a few ways your base can be attacked.

BATTLE CRY (MAP)
Filename: zbattlecry.zip
Size: 86Kb
Rating: ●●●

⊕ Four islands, only four bridges and lots of water makes Battle Cry a map for the naval and air forces.

Battle Cry is another four-player map by Z_Outlaw. Objects for capture are in good supply due to a number of prison camps on the map, each of which contains oil derricks and a tech airport. You'll find that these are defended – so don't just walk in without plenty of firepower – but once captured and garrisoned they make useful outposts. Look out for the city in the middle of the map which is on an island and only approachable via air or sea.

Final Alert 098a4 (Utility)
Final Alert is a great map editor utility and essential tool for any *RA2* enthusiast. It's proving popular with many third-party map-makers (many of the maps here were created using it) due to its extensive list of features. These include a user-friendly interface, conversion of .bmp files into maps, auto-update for future versions and a mini-map display. Get the latest version from the Final Alert website listed, and check out the Final Alert tutorials at www.cncgames.com/maps_tutorials.

EAGLE'S NEST

Bases in Eagle's Nest are well supplied with raw materials – you can build your forces very quickly.

BRIDGE WAR

Watch your defences in Bridge War or your enemy will wipe you out while your attention is elsewhere!

BATTLE CRY

Battle Cry is littered with tech bases. Grab them quickly and fortify – they'll prove very useful.

← DELTA FORCE: LAND WARRIOR

The latest version of Novalogic's top-rated first-person shooter series sees better graphics (they've ditched the voxel graphics at last), more weapons, more features, and some of the best multiplayer action around thanks to their custom Novaworld network. This is no in-yer-face gorefest like *Quake III Arena*, nor small-map blastabout like *Counter-Strike*. This is about proper teamwork-based missions y'hear?

On the CD you'll find no less than seven maps, as well as a couple of handy utilities to try out. Enjoy...

◉ OPERATION EAGLE CLAW (SINGLE-PLAYER MAP)
Filename: OperationEagleClaw.zip
Size: 12Kb
Rating: ◉◉◉

Your objective here is to locate and destroy a nuclear bomb that has fallen into enemy hands. There are plenty of enemy troops around so try to avoid getting into a firefight early on – you'll find yourself horribly outnumbered if you're not careful. You'll need to have practiced your night-time tactics too as author KingSix is determined to make your life as difficult as possible.

◉ DFOPTISTAT V1.0C (UTILITY)
Size: 503Kb
Rating: ◉◉◉

DFOptiStat is a handy utility for anyone who wants to run their own *DFWL* server and keep track of how well every visitor does in battle. You can find it at www.flagball.com.

◉ DERRICKVILLE CTF (MULTIPLAYER MAP)
Filename: derrickville.zip
Size: 9Kb
Rating: ◉◉◉◉◉

◉ DerrickVille is like GasWorks from *Half-Life* only more so – top notch fun.

BATTLE OF MOGADISHU (SINGLE-PLAYER MAP)
MAP OF THE MONTH BATTLE OF MOGADISHU

Filename: BattleofMogadishu.zip
Size: 578Kb
Rating: ◉◉◉◉◉

In 1993, an American Blackhawk helicopter crashed in the city of Mogadishu during a US 'peacekeeping' (huh, the irony of it all) mission to Somalia. In this big map by KingSix, you take the role of a soldier sent in to rescue the crew and find yourself fighting close-quarters with a seemingly unending number of unfriendly and heavily armed enemies. Even though the odds are heavily stacked against you, KingSix has managed to balance it perfectly so that it's by no means impossible to complete. You're just going to have to persevere. You'll need plenty of forward planning, a quick trigger finger and a huge supply of guts if want to crack it. You also have the choice of playing it in daylight, sunset and night-time settings and a hefty PC is recommended if you're going to get the most out of it.

Tread carefully in Mogadishu and check out every roofline for enemy snipers.

This is a great-looking Capture The Flag scenario from Lyzzard featuring an extensive high-level structure that will keep a lot of the action well away from the buildings on the ground. If you're familiar with the GasWorks map from *Half-Life* then you'll remember its network of girder bridges, and this map is very similar. There's loads of detail and buckets of atmosphere to savour.

◉ Sky Bridge CTF (Multiplayer Map)
Filename: skybridge.zip
Size: 8Kb
Rating: ◉◉◉◉

◉ Sky Bridge is a sniper's haven above and a warren of fighting and hiding places below.

Sky Bridge takes the 'high flying' atmosphere already established by author Lyzzard in DerrickVille CTF to new heights with a set of walkways so far off the ground that you'll wind up dead if you fall off. The city below is a maze of obstacles, hiding places and some open spaces for the brave at heart to cross. Install and enjoy.

◉ DESERT OASIS (MULTIPLAYER MAP)
Filename: desertoasis.zip
Size: 9Kb
Rating: ◉◉◉◉

◉ Desert Oasis is a great CTF map with lots of teamplay opportunities.

Desert Oasis is another CTF scenario map from author Lyzzard and as usual it's feature-packed. This is no simple creation – it's chock-full with cover, obstacles, vantage points and more potential for action than most players will know what to do with.

◉ DFOPTIRUN 2.0 (UTILITY)
Size: 322Kb
Rating: ◉◉◉◉

This utility from Flagball.com is designed to make your *Delta Force* games run better. DFOptiRun is compatible with both Roger Wilco and Battlecom voice-over-net communication systems, and will even let you

set up your game parameters through a neat one-page interface. Fire it up and use IP4LW for *Land Warrior*. Full details can be found at www.flagball.com/index.

◉ BLACKHAWK DOWN (SINGLE-PLAYER MAP)
Filename: BLDWN.zip
Size: 15Kb
Rating: ◉◉◉
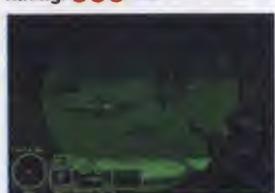
◉ Black Hawk Down is a fun night-time mission. It's tricky but achievable if you're careful.

A team of Rangers have been captured and are being held in a prison camp. Your job is to go in and rescue them before their captors decide they have no further use for them. Take out all the guards, infiltrate the base, liberate the captive Rangers and get them out to the evacuation zone. If that sounds easy then beware – it's another night-time mission by map designer KingSix so it's not going to be any walk in the park.

◉ SAND STORM CTF (MULTIPLAYER MAP)
Filename: sandstorm.zip
Size: 4Kb
Rating: ◉◉◉

◉ There's no point sniping in Sand Storm as you can barely see the end of your nose...

Sand Storm is a Capture The Flag map with a difference – you can hardly see where you're going! The city is surrounded by fog so at least you won't have to worry about snipers, but then you'll also have to make sure you don't wander back into the enemy lines carrying one of their flags either. Rely on your senses, remember where you are and your team might just win.

WHAT YOU DON'T SEE WILL KILL YOU
What more is there to say? This is a nifty screensaver courtesy of the folks at Novalogic. It's quite a big file at 4.2Mb, but coming from Novalogic you can be sure of the quality. Grab it from www.novalogic.com/downloads

DRESS UP YOUR KEYBOARD
If you've managed to mangle the nifty keyboard template that came with your copy of *DFLW* then this is how you can get a new one – again courtesy of Novalogic. It's a .pdf file so you'll need Adobe Acrobat to read it as well as a printer of course, but it's something of an essential for those of us with memories like sieves. Grab it from www.novalogic.com/downloads ▣

⊘ There's nothing more to see here. Move along.

COMMENT

The issue of violence in games has again reared its mutilated head, with an ambitious lawsuit adding further fuel to the debate. So is it a victory for common sense, or a ludicrous over reaction?

🔴 **POTENTIAL MURDERER** Steve Hill

Have you ever played *Doom*? Yes? Then it's only a matter of time before you load up on guns and kill your friends in an orgy of murderous destruction. Your frazzled mind is a powder keg, your fragile psyche a blue touch paper ready to be lit by the incendiary torch of virtual reality.

and bizarrely, the long-defunct Atari. Apart from putting a cash value on the loss of their loved ones, the implication of the claim is that the products of these companies influenced two teenage gunmen to kill 13 people and injure 23 before turning their guns on themselves.

Seems unlikely? Quite, and in fact an almost identical suit

> **Blaming games for shooting is like blaming *The Dukes Of Hazard* for car crashes**

That would appear to be the message coming out of the US anyway, where the families of several victims of the Columbine High School massacre have finally filed their five billion dollar lawsuit against not only id Software, but also a bewildering array of entertainment companies, including Nintendo, Sega, Sony, GT Interactive, Virgin, Activision, AOL/Time Warner,

was filed following the killing of three students in 1997, the case dismissed on the grounds that videogames are not subject to liability laws. This hasn't deterred the latest complainants though, and much of the action again centres around *Doom*, including a perverse claim that one of the killers named his shotgun Arlene after a character in the 1993 game.

PICKED UP A CLIP.
94% HEALTH AMMO ARMS 0% ARMOR
The original *Doom*. Sick and wrong.

178 78% 178%
AMMO HEALTH ARMOR
The school bully.

58 86% 0%
AMMO HEALTH ARMOR
Do not let your kids play this game.

This despite the fact that none of the characters in *Doom* actually have names.

Without wishing to cheapen their grief, do the relatives have a case or are they simply clinging desperately to a stereotypical scapegoat? Let's consider the facts. The Columbine shooting wasn't the first incidence of its kind in the US, and tragically it won't be the last. Going postal, as it is known, is as much a part of the fabric of American society as gross obesity, statistics-oriented sport and lack of interest in the outside world. It's almost a small-scale population control valve, and believe it or not, such occurrences took place long before the advent of sick new 3D murder simulators.

By way of timely example, it was recently announced that the girl who inspired Bob Geldof to pen the 1979 Boomtown Rats hit, *I Don't Like Mondays*, was again due for parole. For those unfamiliar with the story, the 16-year-old embarked on a six and a half hour siege, taking potshots at the local school from her California home, killing two members of staff and wounding eight children

and a police officer. Interviewed mid-siege, she calmly announced: "I don't like Mondays. This livens things up."
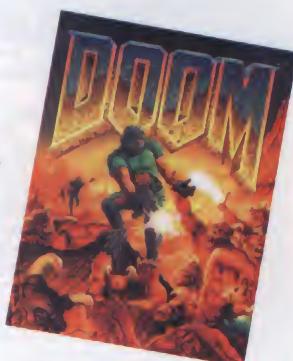
So what was her excuse? Was she sent over the edge by a particularly close game of *Pong*? Had she played so much *Space Invaders* that she could no longer differentiate between man and machine? Probably not. Despite Geldof's claim that the silicon chip inside her head got switched to overload, it's closer to the truth that she was dosed up to the eyeballs on PCP and alcohol, hallucinating violently while wielding the gun given to her by her father for Christmas. Ah. Can you remember what you got for Christmas when you were 16? A TV? A hi-fi? A games console, even? Chances are you didn't tear off the wrapping paper to reveal a .22-calibre semi-automatic rifle.

And therein lies the difference. In a country where it is easier to buy firearms than it is to get a pint of piss weak beer, there are bound to be accidents. Blaming games for shootings is like blaming *The Dukes Of Hazzard* for

car crashes. For further proof, consider Japan, where games are mainstream entertainment and the murder rate is among the lowest in the world.

The sad truth is that man is a sick mammal that has been committing atrocities since the beginning of time. Whenever cavemen are dug up, it's as often as not with their skull cleaved by a fellow troglodyte, surely not as a result of being sent into an uncontrollable bloodlust by a particularly graphic cave painting.

Bad things happen, and entertainment reflects this. So the next time someone points the finger at games, tell them to poke it. Besides, it's all Marilyn Manson's fault. Bleedin' Goth. **PCZ**